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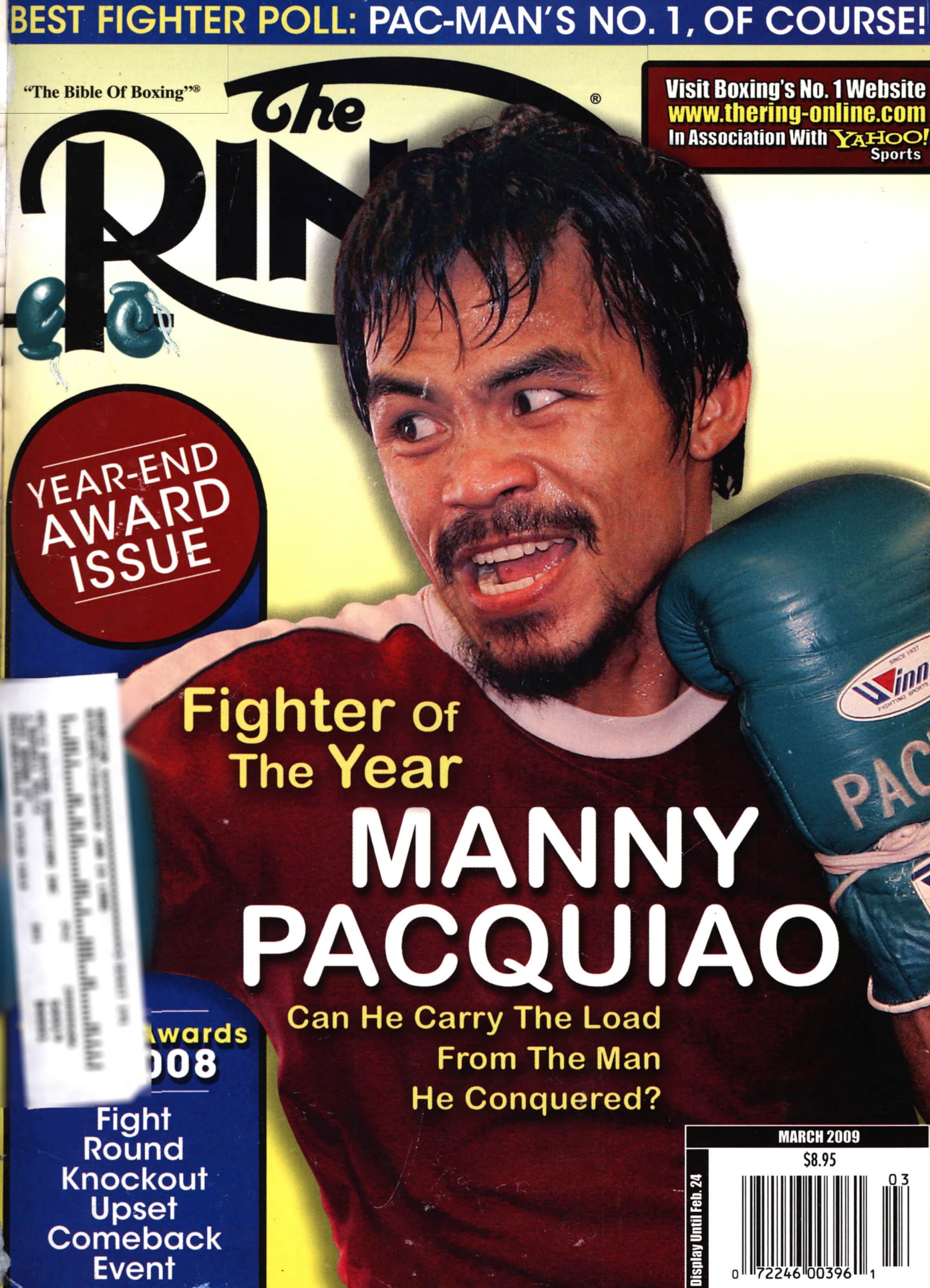

## Fighter of The Year

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Volume 88, No. 3 March 2009

The Ring

# In Pancho's Footsteps

I don't know if you saw it, but there was a YouTube video of Pancho Villa knocking out Jimmy Wilde featured on thering-online.com in late-2009. What an iconic fight—more than 23,000 fans at the Polo Grounds in 1923 came to see a flyweight championship between a Filipino and a Welshman. Unreal.

Moreover, judging from that grainy, old film clip, it wasn't the one-sided rout for Villa the history books and even some of the contemporary accounts would have us believe. These guys were whacking the holy hell out of each other before Villa's youth and firepower drove "The Mighty Atom" face-first into the canvas for a seventh-round knockout.

Eighty-five years later, fellow Filipino Manny Pacquiao has eclipsed Villa in many ways, but without Villa, there might never have been a Pacquiao.

Francisco Guilledo (Villa's real name) stood just a shade over five feet tall, but was a true colossus of the prize ring, the first Asian to win a world championship and the man who opened the door to the lucrative U.S. market for every Filipino fighter who came after him.

Even more remarkable was that he managed to build such an enduring legacy in such a brief period of time. Villa didn't fight in the U.S. until 1922, and by July 1925 he was dead, the victim of an accidental overdose of anesthesia, administered prior to oral surgery. But before his untimely demise, he had already set the bar incredibly high for his would-be successors.

Villa's fearless, pell-mell attacks endeared him to the fans, and, like Pacquiao, he was the highest-paid little man of his time. So many Filipino fighters invaded the United States in Villa's wake, they were nicknamed the "Mosquito Fleet," but none was as good as Villa. Nobody came close, not even Ceferino Garcia, who won the middleweight title in 1939.

Flash Elorde, whom many still consider the greatest Filipino fighter of all-time, was more a Philippines phenomenon than an international star. True, he was a popular attraction in the U.S., but fought most of his important bouts in his native land, where he drew huge crowds and is still regarded with reverence more than two decades after his death. But Elorde never generated anywhere near the excitement in the United States that Villa did before him or Pacquiao afterward.

It was the trail that Villa blazed that Pacquiao followed, and it was a whirlwind fighting style much like Villa's that Pac-Man employed to punch his way to the top. Stylistically, the biggest difference between Pacquiao and Villa is that Manny found Freddie Roach, who convinced him that having a better chin than the other guy was not necessarily the best means of defense. But who knows what Villa might have become had he not died at the age of 24?

Today, Pacquioa's name is on every Filipino's tongue, his image ubiquitous, and his commercial value practically incalculable. Elorde is still a national hero, his story in school textbooks, his family still deeply involved in boxing. Villa, however, is no longer a household name in his native land, just a piece of half-forgotten history, recalled only by hardcore boxing fans and perhaps a historian or two.

That 2008 belonged to Manny Pacquiao is undeniable, and his many accomplishments are documented and celebrated throughout this issue. But as we pause to honor the achievements of the recent past, we would do well to also pay tribute to the little giant in whose footsteps THE RING's 2008 Fighter of the Year has trodden.

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# Opening Shot

**If He Could Have Just Done More Of That ...**

*After winning super heavyweight gold at the Sydney Olympics for the United Kingdom in 2000, it was widely believed that the 6'4½" Audley Harrison, despite making his pro debut at 29 years old, would one day wear a major title belt. Eight years later, after losing an uninspired decision loss to Martin Rogan, a fighter with 10 bouts on his record (albeit wins), Harrison, 23-4 (1), has to seriously consider calling it a career.*

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

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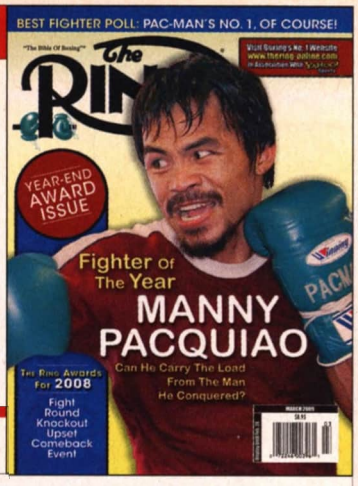


Cover Photo by **Chris Farnia/Top Rank**
Cover Design by **Joseph Rogan**

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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

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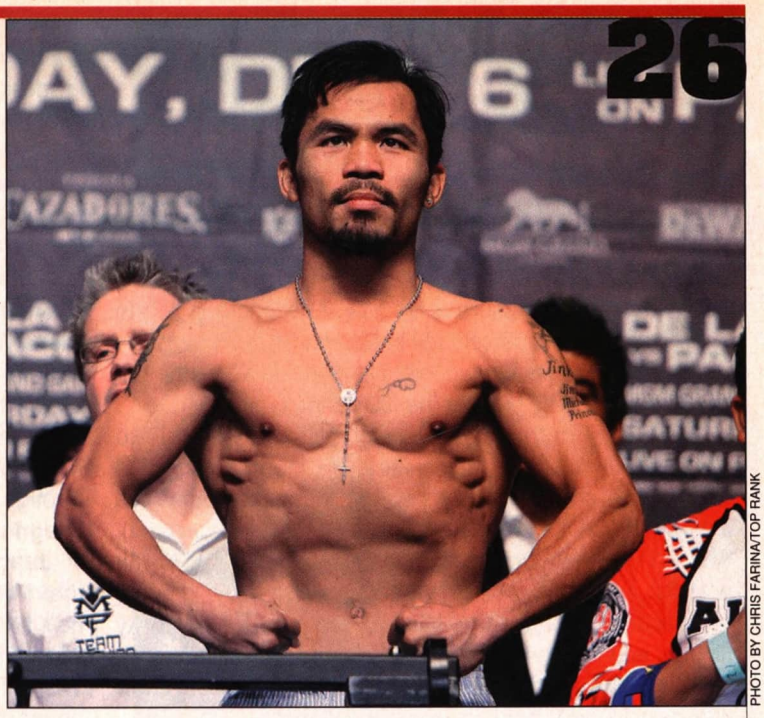


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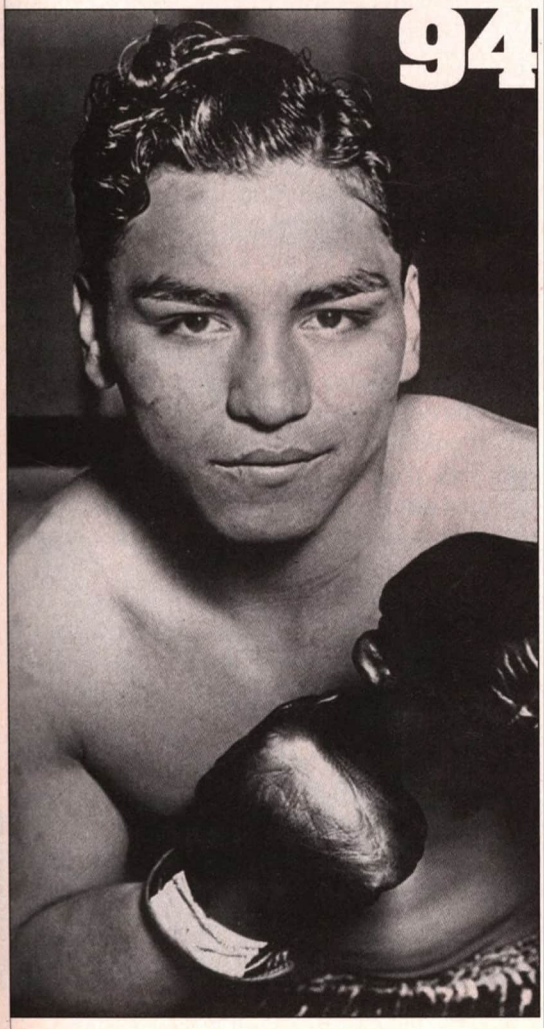


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## Who Will Stay & Who Will Go?

Uh-oh. The pressure is on now. After racking up the best connect percentage in Compu-Stay-Go history—nine punches thrown, eight landed—in 2008, the bar has been set pretty high for the '09 version.

Each year in this space, which tell you which RING champs will still have their titles in 12 months' time and which won't, and in last year's edition, we earned ourselves a hearty pat on the back. We told you David Haye (vacated), Bernard Hopkins (outpointed), Joe Calzaghe (vacated at 168 pounds), Floyd Mayweather (retired), and Joel Casamayor (knocked out) would all go. We told you Kelly Pavlik, Ricky Hatton, and Israel Vazquez would all stay. The only one we got wrong was Ivan Calderon, who we thought would show his age and drop his junior flyweight belt.

But "Iron Boy" is still the champ, and that means we have a chance to try to get that one right this year, along with six others, since there are seven RING champions as of the close of 2008:

**Tomasz Adamek** (cruiserweight): If Andrew Golota gave Polish fighters a bad name in the heart department, Adamek is rapidly undoing that damage. And that's why, from a fan's perspective, we'd all love to see him remain champ for a while. But he has two issues working against him. First, he's a 32-year-old slugger who could hit the wall at any time. And second, a rematch with Steve Cunningham is likely, and the evidence of their first fight suggests it could go either way. It's close, but the overall odds are that Adamek doesn't make it through the year on top. **Prognosis: Go**

**Joe Calzaghe** (light heavyweight): Here's a lay-up for us. It looks about 98 percent likely that Calzaghe's ready to retire; he might even have announced it by the time you read this. So enjoy your retirement, Joe. This "dying sport" will just have to try to find a way to miraculously survive without you. **Prognosis: Go**

**Kelly Pavlik** (middleweight): Getting through the first few months of the year will be easy, since "The Ghost" is scheduled for a mandatory mismatch against limited Marco Antonio Rubio on February 21. The question is what Pavlik's schedule the second half of '09 will look like, and, specifically, whether it will include a showdown with Arthur Abraham. But don't let Pavlik's disaster against Bernard Hopkins fool you; the Ohioan is still a championship-level fighter, and Abraham doesn't have the skill set to follow B-Hop's blueprint. It's a close call, but we lean toward Pavlik if the fight comes off. **Prognosis: Stay**

**Ricky Hatton** (junior welterweight): Impressively, "The Hitman" still has never lost at 140 pounds. But that streak will end in '09. A superfight with Manny Pacquiao is almost a sure thing, and a Pacquiao victory is just as much of a lock. He's simply too fast for Hatton, and unlike Paulie Malignaggi, he has power that the Brit can't just walk right through. After four years, Hatton's title reign ends via TKO. **Prognosis: Go**

**Juan Manuel Marquez** (lightweight): It's no guarantee that Marquez will even make it into March as champ—he's expected to face dangerous Juan Diaz on February 28—but you have to favor the brilliant JMM in that fight. The only opponent you wouldn't favor him to beat at 135 pounds is Manny Pacquiao, and given all of "Pac-Man's"

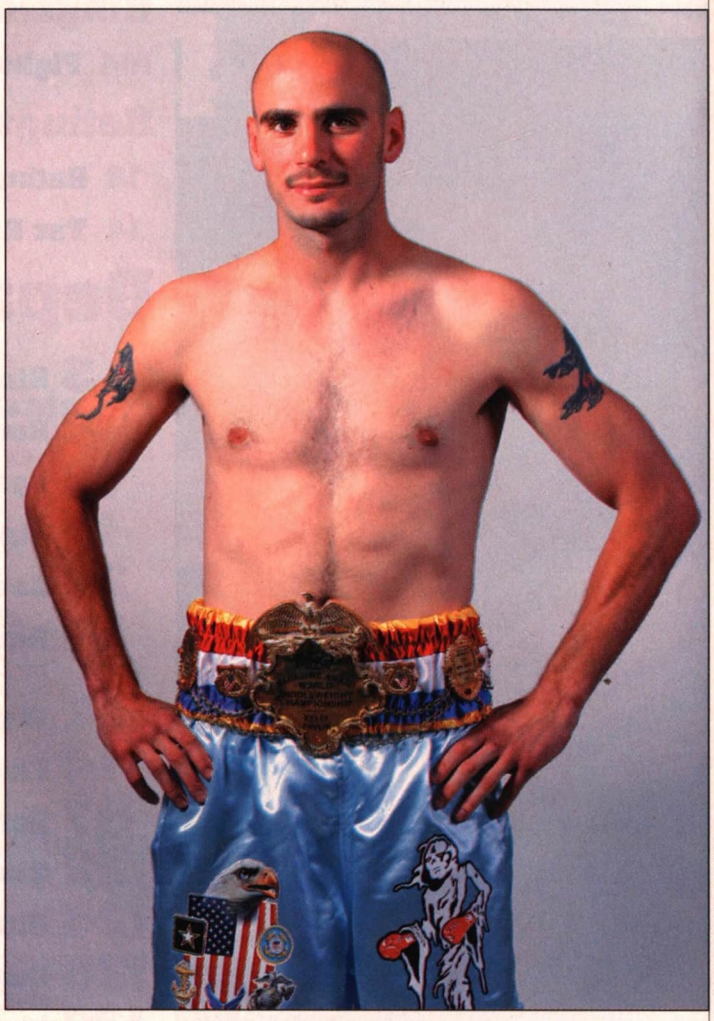


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

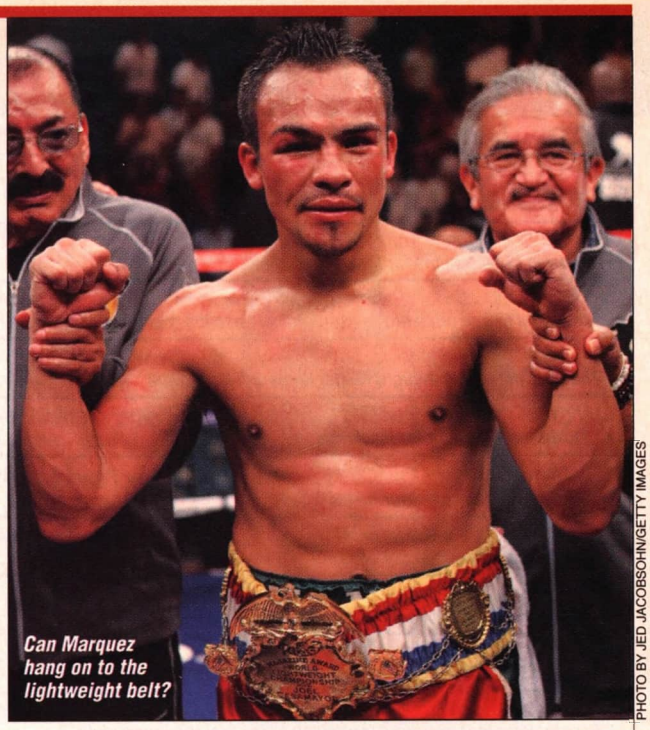
*Will Pavlik still be middleweight champion this time next year?*

other options, a third fight between them in '09 doesn't seem likely. And if it does happen, it would probably require Marquez moving up to 140, which he can of course do without necessarily giving up his RING belt. **Prognosis: Stay**

**Israel Vazquez** (junior featherweight): Once Vazquez recovers from eye surgery, he's going to open his eyes to see a scary array of challengers at the top of the junior featherweight division. There's his three-time foe Rafael Marquez, the awkwardly destructive Celestino Caballero, and perhaps the best 25-or-under fighter in the game in Juan Manuel Lopez. All would be 50/50 to dethrone Vazquez. In 2009, one of them will. **Prognosis: Go**

**Ivan Calderon** (junior flyweight): Now that he's 34, it's tempting to predict that Iron Boy's "O" will go this year, but there simply isn't anyone at 108 pounds whom we'd pick to bump him off. Ulises Solis? Cesar Canchila? Good fighters, but a notch below this slick southpaw. It's possible that Calderon will leave the division in pursuit of a big fight, but then again, what opponents are there at 105 or 112 who'll attract major dollars? **Prognosis: Stay**

**—Eric Raskin**



*Can Marquez hang on to the lightweight belt?*

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

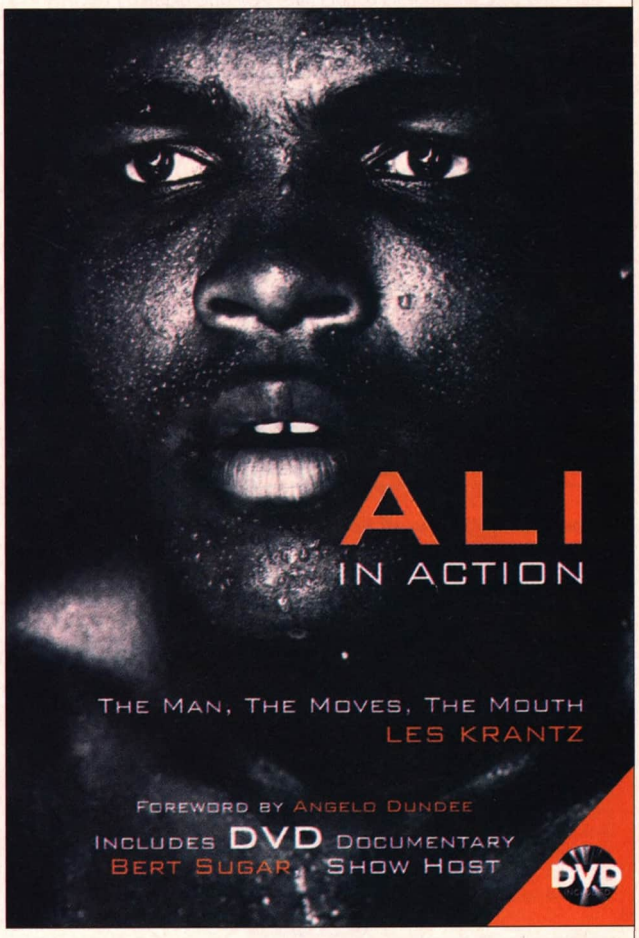
## Boxing Bookshelf

It's hard not to be cynical regarding the number of books published about Muhammad Ali. By now he's been packaged and repackaged as many times as those other '60s icons, The Beatles and John F. Kennedy. But for those who don't know where to start, they might consider the latest, a just-in-time-for-the-holidays offering called *Ali In Action: The Man, The Moves, The Mouth* (Lyons Press, $34.95, hardcover, 150 pages), a slickly produced tribute to The Greatest.

Les Krantz, whose background as a documentary filmmaker is apparent here, wrote the book; the book comes with a DVD loaded with Ali footage. The press release for the book makes much of the accompanying disc (yes, it's the first Ali book that comes with a DVD, as if this were some groundbreaking event), but there's little here that we haven't read or seen before. In fact, the book and disc feel like the Hallmark card version of Ali's life, with the nastier aspects pruned away. Of course, even a watered down version of Ali's life is fascinating, and the visual of the young Ali dismantling his opponents is still breathtaking after all these years. He really could float like a butterfly.

The DVD is narrated by Bert Sugar and features a handful of rare clips that may be interesting for Ali buffs, including a young Cassius Clay recounting the tale of his stolen bike, a grown Ali pounding out a boogie-woogie tune on a piano, Ali talking earnestly about how he dislikes the sight of blood on an opponent's face, color footage of fights previously more familiar in black and white, and footage of Ali promoting his autobiography. Whether or not these clips are worth the hefty price tag is your call.

**—Don Stradley**



# TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

| DATE | WINNER/LOSER | NETWORK | DIVISION | SIGNIFICANCE | MATCHUP | RESULT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11/21/08 | Nestor Rocha W 10 Oscar Andrade | Telefutura | b | C+ | C- | C |
| *Rocha had more ads on his trunks then even NASCAR allows* | | | | | | |
| 11/21/08 | Jhonny Gonzalez KO 4 Reynaldo Lopez | Telefutura | jf | B | C+ | C+ |
| *Sixth win in 16 months for Mexican slugger* | | | | | | |
| 11/21/08 | Celestino Caballero KO 4 Steve Molitor | Showtime | jf | A- | A | B |
| *Finally get to use the word "eviscerate" to describe a unification bout* | | | | | | |
| 11/22/08 | James Kirkland KO 8 Brian Vera | HBO | jm | B | B- | C |
| *The next defensive thought Kirkland has will be his first* | | | | | | |
| **11/22/08** | **Ricky Hatton KO 11 Paul Malignaggi** | **HBO** | **jw** | **A-** | **B+** | **B** |
| ***A jackhammer versus a toothpick*** | | | | | | |
| 11/28/08 | Joaquin Zamora W 10 Jose Gonzalez | Telefutura | jm | C | C+ | B+ |
| *Zamora wins my-turn-your-turn slugfest* | | | | | | |
| 11/28/08 | Jesus Soto Karass KO 2 Hicklet Lau | Telefutura | jm | C+ | F | D+ |
| *Lau has been taking scary amounts of punishment since 2002* | | | | | | |
| 11/29/08 | Chris Arreola KO 3 Travis Walker | HBO | h | B+ | C+ | B+ |
| *Is Arreola a throwback to the underachieving heavies of the '80s?* | | | | | | |
| 11/29/08 | Paul Williams KO 8 Verno Phillips | HBO | jm | B | B | C+ |
| *Williams is boxing's version of the triple-threat* | | | | | | |
| 12/05/08 | Mike Jones KO 3 Luciano Perez | Telefutura | w | C+ | C | C+ |
| *Perez should get an award for getting to his feet the same night* | | | | | | |
| 12/05/08 | Travis Kauffman KO 3 Malachy Farrell | Showtime | h | C | C | C- |
| *Farrell looked like an obese snowman* | | | | | | |
| 12/05/08 | Luis Abregu W 10 David Estrada | Showtime | w | B- | B- | B |
| *Late rally by Estrada casts doubts upon Abregu's future* | | | | | | |
| 12/06/08 | Victor Ortiz KO 2 Jeffrey Resto | PPV | jw | B | C+ | C+ |
| *Big fight atmosphere brings out the best in Ortiz* | | | | | | |
| 12/06/08 | Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Sergio Medina | PPV | jf | A- | B | D |
| *Lopez the most destructive Puerto Rican since Wilfredo Gomez* | | | | | | |
| 12/06/08 | Manny Pacquiao KO 8 Oscar De La Hoya | PPV | w | A+ | A+ | B+ |
| *Performances like this get boxers mythologized* | | | | | | |
| 12/11/08 | Joseph Agbeko W 12 William Gonzalez | Versus | b | A- | B+ | B |
| *Gonzalez looked as if Agbeko fought with razor blades, not gloves* | | | | | | |
| **12/11/08** | **Tomasz Adamek W 12 Steve Cunningham** | **Versus** | **c** | **A** | **A** | **A** |
| ***Every time Cunningham got back in the fight, he suffered a knockdown*** | | | | | | |
| 12/12/08 | Brian Viloria KO 2 Benjamin Garcia | Telefutura | fl | C | D- | C |
| *"Hawaiian Punch" pours on the juice against weak opponent* | | | | | | |
| 12/12/08 | Urbano Antillon KO 4 Juan Cruz | Telefutura | jl | B- | C+ | C+ |
| *Antillon is ready for a title shot* | | | | | | |
| 12/13/08 | Andre Ward KO 3 Esteban Camou | Versus | sm | B- | C+ | C |
| *It is hard to argue quick stoppage in such a one-sided bout* | | | | | | |
| 12/13/08 | James Toney W 12 Fres Oquendo | Versus | h | B | C | D |
| *Toney is struggling against progressively weaker opposition* | | | | | | |
| 12/13/08 | Yuri Foreman W 10 James Moore | Showtime | jm | B- | C | C |
| *The lightest hitting Foreman in the history of Foremans* | | | | | | |
| 12/13/08 | Kendall Holt W 12 Demetrius Hopkins | Showtime | jw | A- | B+ | B- |
| *Titleholder wanted belt more than challengers was willing to risk to take it* | | | | | | |
| 12/13/08 | Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Hasim Rahman | HBO | h | B | C- | D |
| *Klitschko looked dominant and underwhelming at the same time* | | | | | | |

**Category Explanation:** "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

**Division key:** h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

# Canastota Bound

Unlike some years, there can no bellyaching about the qualifications of the three fighters voted into the Modern Category (last bout no earlier than 1943) of the International Boxing Hall of Fame's Class of 2009.

Former heavyweight champion **Lennox Lewis**, who was elected his first year of eligibility, heads the list. Junior lightweight **Brian Mitchell** and bantamweight **Orlando Canizales** had a much longer wait, but are certainly worthy inductees by any standard.

Lewis, who won a gold medal for Canada at the 1988 Olympics, defeated every major heavyweight of his era, including Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman, the only two fighters to beat him in the professional ranks. Lewis was still the reigning world champion when he retired in 2003 with an overall record of 41-2-1 (32).

Mitchell turned pro in 1981 and went on to win both the IBF and WBA 130-pound titles. The South African went 12-0-2 in title bouts and tallied a record of 45-1-3 (21) before retiring in 1995.

Canizales, from Laredo, Texas, turned pro in 1984, captured the IBF bantamweight title in '88, and made 16 successful defenses before relinquishing the title to unsuccessfully challenge WBA super bantamweight titleholder Wilfredo Vazquez in 1995. Canizales continued to fight until '99, when he retired with a record of 50-5-1 (37).

*Lewis head IBHOF Class of 2009*

Elected in the Old-Timer Category (last bout no earlier than 1839, no later than 1842) were middleweight champions **William "Gorilla" Jones** and **Billy Soose**, and welterweight champion **"Mysterious" Billy Smith**.

Jones, the second black man to win the 160-pound crown (Tiger Flowers was the first), turned pro in 1924, and in 1932 won the world championship in an elimination tournament to find a successor to Mickey Walker. Jones lost the title later that year on a controversial disqualification to Frenchman Marcel Thil in Paris. He rebounded to take the National Boxing Association's version of the title in '33, but never bothered to defend it. Jones retired in 1940 with a record of 96-20-13 (54) with 9 no-decisions, 2 no-contests.

Soose, who only fought pro from 1938 until 1942, won the middleweight belt with a 15-round decision over Ken Overlin in May '41. The Pennsylvanian relinquished the title four months later, had four more bouts, and retired in January '42, leavings a record of 34-6-1 (13).

Canadian Smith turned pro in 1891 and went on to win the welterweight title three times before retiring in 1911. Sometimes referred to as "The Dirtiest Fighter Who Ever Lived," Smith tallied a record of 29-19-26 (22) with 7 no-decisions, 3 no-contests. Ten of his defeats came via disqualification.

Bare-knuckle bruiser **Tom Hyer**, recognized as the first heavyweight champion of America, was elected in the Pioneer Category (last bout in or prior to 1892).

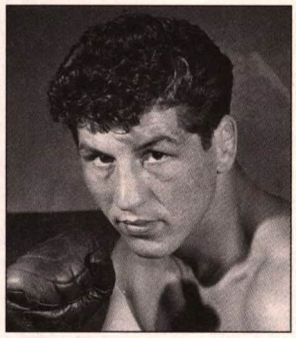
**Billy Gibson** (manager), **Bob Goodman** (publicist, matchmaker, promoter), **Abe J. Green** (commissioner), and **Akihiko Honda** (promoter) were voted into the Non-Participant Category, while journalists **Paul Gallico** and **Hugh McIlvanney**, along with broadcaster **Larry Merchant**, enter the IBHOF in the Observer Category.

For info regarding this year's Induction Weekend (June 11-June 14), call 315-697-7095 or click on www.ibhof.com

# Outside the Ropes

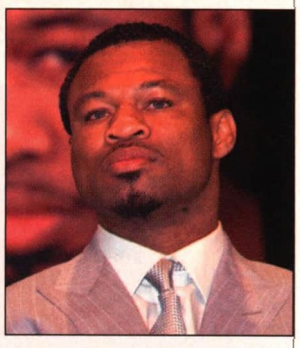
*Pac-Man: Wins military honors*

Filipino idol **Manny Pacquiao**, who is a reservist master sergeant in the Philippines Army, was awarded the Legion of Honor for sports and military merit in a special ceremony held in Manila ... The **50th Annual Boxing Tournament**, held at the Café Royal in London in aid of the Licensed Trade Charity, raised £35,000 ... The **Oscar De La Hoya Animo High School** in Los Angeles was awarded a gold medal and a ranking of number 53 by *U.S. News And World Report*'s prestigious annual survey of the "100 Best High Schools In The United States" ... **Jane Couch**, who took British Boxing Board of Control to court to win the right for women to box professionally in the UK, has retired from the ring. The 40-year-old Couch tallied a 28-11 (9) record during a 14-year career, and will now concentrate on promoting ... Sculpture **Carl LeVotch** has been commissioned to create a statue of former middleweight champion **Joey Giardello** that will be erected at South 13th and Mifflin Streets in South Philadelphia. The project will be funded by the joint efforts of Ring One of the Veteran Boxers Association, the Harrowgate Boxing Club, and phillyboxinghistory.com ... Florida Circuit Judge **Edward Garrison** ruled that promoter **Don King** owes $500,000 to EB Acquisitions, a development company that King once worked with to develop and promote a former jai-alai fronton in Mangonia Park as a residential project ... British promoter **Frank Warren** won his High Court action against **Herbie Hide**, who claimed Warren owed him £50,000 for his 2001 fight with **Vitali Klitschko**. The court ruled that Warren did not owe Hide any money and ordered Hide to pay Warren's legal costs ... Australian promoter **Peter Maniatis** wants to bring **Tommy Morrison** Down Under in April to present the Bob Rose Cup at a fundraiser for Morrison's KO AIDS charity foundation. Then, if everything goes well, Maniatis said he wants to Morrison "cleared medically to fight and maybe challenge Australian heavyweight champ **John Hopoate** or **Solomon Haumono**" ... Brooklyn College is trying to raise funds to open a library containing **Hank Kaplan**'s boxing archives, which the historian donated to the college prior to his death a little more than a year ago. **Anthony Cucchiara**, who teaches archival management at the school, estimates the project will cost $250,000. Kaplan's collection was valued at almost $3-million by an independent appraiser. To assist in the library's fundraising effort, checks can be made out to Brooklyn College Library/Kaplan Collection and sent to Cucchiara at 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210 ... In the February 2009 issue we informed you that **Nonito Donaire** had fired his father as his trainer. In a somewhat unorthodox move, Donaire has hired Filipino bantamweight contender **Gerry Penalosa** as his new trainer ... Cincinnati's **Shamrock Boxing Gym** is danger of being shut down due to financial difficulties. According to trainer **Terry O'Brian**, who has run the gym for more than 40 years, the building that houses the gym is in debt to the tune of $219,000. Shamrock Boxing Inc. is considering filing for bankruptcy, which could stave off a foreclosure auction ... The WBC has opened an investigation of **Shane Mosley** following the release of court transcripts in which Mosley acknowledged using performance-enhancing drug as he prepared for his 2003 bout with Oscar De La Hoya ... Former featherweight contender **Scott Harrison**, 31, had his prison term reduced by two months by the Court of Appeal in Edinburgh ... British cutman and trainer **Frank Black**, 73, died in his sleep on December 6. Black was an important part of the highly successful **Terry Lawless** camp for many years and worked a card in London a few hours before his death ... Canadian junior welterweight **Mike Post**, 17-1-1 (13), was found dead at his gym in Oakville, Ontario, on November 28. The cause of death has not been determined, but foul play is not suspected.



*Giardello: Statue to be erected*

*Kaplan: Library needs funding*



*Mosley: Under investigation*

## Quotable

"It's overwhelming. Simply breathtaking. My heart rejoices that I can help."

*—Don King, talking about the 100,000 turkeys he was to give to needy families for the Christmas season*

"Amateur boxing has totally changed, making the crossover to the pros a lot harder. I think they've done it on purpose, that amateur boxing has made the style different intentionally to make it harder to turn. Hooks don't really count, fights are stopped at the first sight of blood—it's fencing with gloves."

*—British promoter Frank Maloney, speaking to* ***Boxing News****' Danny Flexen about the major changes the sport has undergone since he began his career in the early-1980s*

# [Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended December 21, 2008

**Heavyweights:** Nicolay Valuev (fourth last issue) switches with Alexander Povetkin (fifth last issue), based on Valuev's poor performance against Evander Holyfield.

**Cruiserweights:** Tomasz Adamek (second last issue) shoots to the top, becoming THE RING world champion after scoring a split-decision over Steve Cunningham, who remains number one. Adamek's promotion moves everyone from two to 10 up one spot, opening a place at 10 for B.J. Flores.

**Light Heavyweights:** No changes.

**Super Middleweights:** Andre Dirrell debuts at 10, replacing Jeff Lacy (10th last issue), who is 2-2 over his last four fights.

**Middleweights:** Khoren Gevor makes his debut in the ratings at number four, thanks to his seventh-round stoppage of Amin Asikainen (fourth last issue), who drops to nine. Raul Marquez (ninth last issue) exits after announcing his retirement.

**Junior Middleweights:** Some reshuffling, as Oscar De La Hoya (third last issue) exits after being stopped by Manny Pacquiao. Paul Williams enters at two after stopping Verno Phillips (second last issue), who falls to three. James Kirkland debuts at 10, replacing Joel Julio.

**Welterweights:** With Paul Williams (second last issue) leaving to campaign at junior middleweight, everyone from three to five moves up one place each. Manny Pacquaio debuts in a second division, at number five, based on his sterling performance against De La Hoya.

**Junior Welterweights:** No changes.

**Lightweights:** No changes.

**Junior Lightweights:** Jorge Linares moves up from featherweight to bump out Malcolm Klassen at 10.

**Featherweights:** Ranked number four last issue, Linares' departure enables everyone from five to 10 to move up one slot each, and creates room for Choi Tseveenpurev to debut at 10.

**Junior Featherweights:** Sergio Manuel Medina exits at five, after being blown out in the first round by fourth-rated Juan Manuel Lopez. Medina's departure allows everyone from six to 10 to advance one place each, and enables Rendall Munroe to debut at 10.

**Bantamweights:** Joseph Agbeko (sixth last issue) switches with Gerry Penalosa (fifth last issue), based on activity. William Gonzalez debuts at 10, replacing Luis Perez, after his strong showing against Agbeko.

**Junior Bantamweights:** No changes.

**Flyweights:** No changes.

**Junior Flyweights:** Edgar Sosa leaps to two after stopping number-five rated Juanito Rubillar. That reshuffling lowers Cesar Canchila (second last issue) and Giovanni Segura (third last issue) one place each. Bert Batawang debuts at 10, replacing Rayonta Whitfield, who is campaigning at flyweight.

**Strawweights:** Yutaka Niida (third last issue) and Eagle Kyowa (fifth last issue) both exit after announcing their retirements, opening spots at nine and 10 for Juan Pacacios and Ronald Barrera.

**Pound-for-pound:** No changes.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

## Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Lightweight/Welterweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Antonio Margarito**
   Welterweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
8. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
9. **Ivan Calderon**
   Junior Flyweight
10. **Ricky Hatton**
    Junior Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
**TheRing-online.com**

# [The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended December 21, 2008

## How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Tomasz Adamek reigns as world cruiserweight champion after beating Steve Cunningham*

## Heavyweights

*Weight Unlimited*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 52-3 (46)
2. **VITALI KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 36-2 (35)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 16-0 (12)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 50-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **SAMUEL PETER** Nigeria 30-2 (23)
8. **OLEG MASKAEV** Kazakhstan 35-6 (26)
9. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ** Cuba 44-1 (35)
10. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO** Ukraine 29-0 (19)

## Jr. Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 154 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 41-3 (29)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS** Augusta, GA 36-1 (27)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Belize 42-11-1 (21)
4. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
5. **SERGIO MORA** Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
6. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Argentina 44-1-1 (24)
7. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Ukraine 36-0 (22)
8. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 32-3-1 (23)
9. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Haiti 30-1 (19)
10. **JAMES KIRKLAND** Austin, TX 24-0 (21)

## Featherweights

*Weight Limit: 126 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 42-0-1 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 36-1-1 (15)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 36-1-2 (26)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-1-2 (19)
5. **MARIO SANTIAGO** Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
6. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
7. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 63-6-1 (39)
8. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-1-1 (8)
9. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ** Mexico 37-11-1 (23)
10. **CHOI TSEVEENPUREV** Mongolia 27-4 (19)

## Jr. Featherweights

*Weight Limit: 122 pounds*

**Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 31-2 (22)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 24-0 (22)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 36-1 (25)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 35-2 (31)
6. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 28-1 (11)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 34-1-2 (21)
8. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 40-6 (34)
9. **BERNABE CONCEPCION** Philippines 27-1-1 (16)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE** England 16-1 (7)

## Bantamweights

*Weight Limit: 118 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 25-2 (9)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 24-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-1-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 22-2 (18)
5. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 26-1 (22)
6. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
7. **ABNER MARES** Mexico 17-0 (10)
8. **VUSI MALINGA** South Africa 18-2-1 (11)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ** Panama 27-2 (20)
10. **WILLIAM GONZALEZ** Nicaragua 21-3 (19)

## Cruiserweights

*Weight Limit: 200 pounds*

**Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 36-1 (24)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **O'NEIL BELL**
Jamaica 26-3-1 (24)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 29-2 (22)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 23-1 (18)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
9. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1 (10)
10. **B.J. FLORES**
Chandler, AZ 21-0 (13)

## Light Heavyweights

*Weight Limit: 175 pounds*

**Champ: JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 46-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 27-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 48-12-2 (33)
4. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-5 (19)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 52-5 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 25-0 (15)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 32-3 (17)
10. **CHRIS HENRY**
Houston, TX 22-1 (18)

## Super Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 168 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 23-0 (18)
3. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 27-2 (21)
4. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 34-3 (23)
5. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 28-2-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 24-0 (20)
7. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 27-3-2 (17)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 27-1 (19)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Russia 34-0 (24)
10. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
Flint, MI 17-0 (12)

## Middleweights

*Weight Limit: 160 pounds*

**Champ: KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 34-1 (30)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 28-0 (23)
2. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 31-2-1 (13)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 29-3 (14)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-3 (16)
5. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-2-3 (12)
6. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 37-12 (23)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-8 (43)
8. **MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO**
Mexico 43-4-1 (37)
9. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 25-2 (17)
10. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 20-0 (12)

## Welterweights

*Weight Limit: 147 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-5 (27)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 32-1 (26)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 45-5 (38)
4. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-2 (20)
5. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 48-3-2 (36)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
7. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 37-6 (25)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 29-3 (14)
9. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 23-0 (19)
10. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 28-1-1 (10)

## Jr. Welterweights

*Weight Limit: 140 pounds*

**Champ: RICKY HATTON**
England 45-1 (32)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 23-0 (11)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 37-2-2 (22)
3. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 30-2-1 (13)
4. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2 (5)
5. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Cameroon 17-2 (9)
6. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-2 (13)
7. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia 32-2 (28)
8. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 20-1-1 (16)
9. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 25-0 (24)
10. **JUAN LAZCANO**
Mexico 37-5-1 (27)

## Lightweights

*Weight Limit: 135 pounds*

**Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 49-4-1 (36)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 48-3-2 (36)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 34-1 (17)
4. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
5. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 34-2-1 (17)
6. **JULIO DIAZ**
Mexico 36-4 (26)
7. **ANTONIO PITALUA**
Mexico 46-3 (40)
8. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-2 (20)
9. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-1-2 (25)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 21-2 (14)

## Jr. Lightweights

*Weight Limit: 130 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 24-0 (24)
2. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 46-7-2 (29)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
4. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-3-1 (19)
5. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 28-4 (11)
6. **NICKY COOK**
England 29-1(16)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
8. **URBANO ANTILLON**
Mexico 25-0 (18)
9. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 21-0-1 (12)
10. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 26-0 (17)

## Jr. Bantamweights

*Weight Limit: 115 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 31-1-1 (25)
2. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 38-2-1 (28)
3. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 36-4-2 (15)
4. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-3 (27)
5. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 12-1 (7)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 51-4-1 (39)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 28-2-2 (15)
9. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-4-1 (9)
10. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 21-4 (7)

## Flyweights

*Weight Limit: 112 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 20-1 (13)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 33-2-3 (21)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 69-3-1 (37)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 33-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 28-0-2 (17)
6. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 45-1-1 (19)
7. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 38-7-2 (32)
8. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 19-0 (12)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 26-5-1 (19)
10. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 22-2 (15)

## Jr. Flyweights

*Weight Limit: 108 pounds*

**Champ: IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 32-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 28-1-2 (20)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 34-5 (18)
3. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 27-1 (21)
4. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 19-1-1 (15)
5. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 46-11-7 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 27-3-1 (11)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 18-1 (9)
10. **BERT BATAWANG**
Philippines 48-11-1 (36)

## Strawweights

*Weight Limit: 105 pounds*

**Champ: Vacant**

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 22-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 25-0-1 (15)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 29-0 (12)
4. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-4-1 (20)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 22-3 (9)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 23-1-3 (14)
8. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 19-0 (15)
9. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 25-2 (20)
10. **RONALD BARRERA**
Colombia 26-5-1 (16)

By Jeff Ryan

# Lowered Ball, Raised Expectations?

The illuminated ball in Times Square has completed its descent, the champagne corks have ceased popping, and all of those year-end best/worst lists have finished reminding us which fighters in 2008 dropped the ball themselves (Kelly Pavlik, Oscar De La Hoya, Roy Jones, Steve Cunningham) or got to uncork some punches that left their rivals staggering like drunks at midnight (Manny Pacquiao, Joe Calzaghe, Bernard Hopkins, the Klitschko Brothers). So enough about 2008, okay? It's ancient history. (And in the case of 46-year-old Evander Holyfield, we mean that literally.)

Happy New Year! Good old 2009 is already promising that we'll have fun, fun, fun now that Daddy took your Chris Byrd away. It figures to be an intriguing 12 months for boxing. With a few aging superstars apparently finished as big-fight candidates, talents like Paul Williams and Chad Dawson seemingly on the verge of something special, and a crop of Beijing Olympians turning pro, '09 may demand some redirecting of our attention. Of course, there will still be some old problems to deal with and some familiar names returning to the headlines, though this time they'll be in unaccustomed roles.

The arrival of the new year is already raising some interesting questions. Here are a few such Queer Street queries:

**1. Will Floyd Mayweather un-retire in '09?** Will Larry Merchant keep chuckling at his own jokes? You bet the best fighter in the world will be back this year. Do you know why Mayweather is still called "Pretty Boy" these days? Because you can be sure that he's pretty fed up with, pretty intolerant of, and pretty tempted to put an end to, someone else wearing a pound-for-pound crown that Mayweather once had grafted to his scalp.

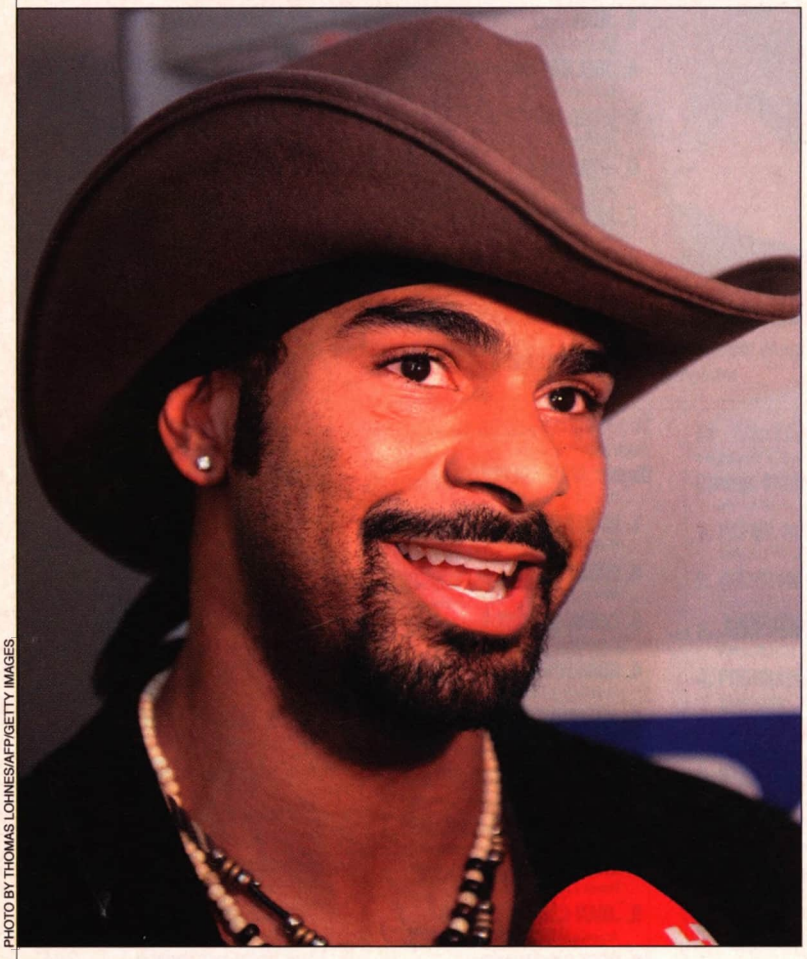


PHOTO BY THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Haye goes for the gusto*

Mayweather vs. Pacquiao isn't just the 800-pound gorilla in the room, it's the 800-pound gorilla standing on your foot. It's now about as unavoidable as another *Batman* sequel or the arrival of spring. The one junior welter in the ointment is Ricky Hatton. "The Hitman's" people are throwing around contract offers like they're Hank Steinbrenner, and it's likely that Hatton will square off with "Pac Man" or Pretty Boy before the world's two best fighters can meet each other.

Someone should remind Pacquiao that he has some serious mileage on his body and lots of scars around his eyes, and that he should face Mayweather now. And they should tell Mayweather that a rematch with Hatton is a waste of everyone's time. No one would expect the outcome to be any different in a return bout.

That was a nice win you had over Paulie Malignaggi, Ricky, but do us all a favor and beat it. You're getting in the way of a classic.

**2. What is David Haye thinking?** He's thinking like a guy who actually believes in himself and not like the all-too-common boxing big mouth whose valor quickly shrivels when encountering the ice bath of reality.

"I'm not cherry-picking," the former cruiserweight king said in announcing a summer battle with Vitali Klitschko. "I'm going after the most dangerous fighter on the planet."

Haye, who's coming off a heavyweight tuneup in which he kayoed Monte Barrett but hit the floor in the process, could have pulled a Roy Jones and looked for the easiest alphabet title. But the Briton is full of confidence, possesses punishing power he's convinced he can carry north with him, and thirsts for a challenge. And maybe he's not as crazy as he seems. Sure, Klitschko enjoys a huge edge in height (4½ inches) and weight (probably 30 pounds), but he'll be 38 at fight time and once quit on his stool against Byrd. Despite his questionable chin, Haye can be expected to stand and trade with the Ukrainian at times, not peck and flee all night, ala Michael Spinks vs. Larry Holmes.

Whatever happens, Haye deserves big props for having faith in his ability and seeking out the toughest way to test it. You know, the way fighters did in the old days.

**3. Can boxing sustain its current price structure in a lagging economy?** With tickets at Las Vegas' MGM Grand ranging between $150 and $1,500 and HBO Pay-Per-View charging $54.95, Pacquiao-De La Hoya sold out the building and drew the third-largest PPV audience of any non-heavyweight bout in history. That's impressive. But at a time when folks are fixing up old cars instead of buying new ones, postponing long-awaited vacations, and worrying about being laid off, sports events have become a luxury item.

Unless the nation's financial picture improves greatly, it's unlikely any matchup, with the exception of bouts involving Pacquiao or Mayweather, is going to be able to affix a lofty price tag to itself in '09. And that's not a bad thing. It means that we may start seeing fights that would normally air on PPV show up on HBO instead. In a better economy, January's Shane Mosley-Antonio Margarito showdown might have been worthy of a PPV slot. Instead, it played HBO and tickets at L.A.'s Staples Center went for a modest $50 to $300.

Let's hope that's a trend.

**4. Will this be the final season for *The Contender*?** Here's hoping it is. Though just about anything involving the Sweet Science, from HBO's *24/7* series to old films on ESPN Classic, usually piques my interest, *The Contender* never did. Even putting aside my general distaste for reality shows, a few things turn me off about it. The purist in me doesn't care for the five-round distance. Some of the behind-the-scenes tension and family moments are obviously staged. And it bugs me that a show whose original intention was to feature unknowns and kids struggling to make it could include a former *titleholder*, Steve Forbes.

*The Contender* has jumped from NBC to ESPN to now Versus, a reverse march that would make the backpedaling Malignaggi proud. It has an annoying egomaniac, Tony Danza, as host. And now it's featuring unknown cruiserweights. There's a real selling point, huh? Especially with Haye now gone from the division, a lot of us don't even want to watch the cruiserweights we *do* know.

**5. Can Pavlik shake of the effects of his loss to Hopkins?** By the time you read this, the Youngstown, Ohio, favorite should have returned to action in a middleweight title defense against Marco Antonio Rubio. Pavlik bears close watching during '09. The one-sided thrashing he got from "B-Hop" in October is the kind of beating that sometimes ruins a fighter. It's not so much the physical damage as the mental fallout.

The plus for Pavlik is that he's returning to a division in which he's most comfortable. The minus is that he comes back with his head held a bit lower and his unbeaten record and aura gone. Both he and his future foes have seen his face lumped up, his bombs bouncing harmlessly off another man's chin, and his limitations revealed. When Marvin Hagler, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Thomas Hearns suffered setbacks, it made them stronger. But after Felix Trinidad, Donald Curry, and Jeff Lacy lost for the first time, their mojo disappeared forever.

"The Ghost" might yet again frighten the world's 160-pounders. Or he may be merely a ghost of his former self. ■

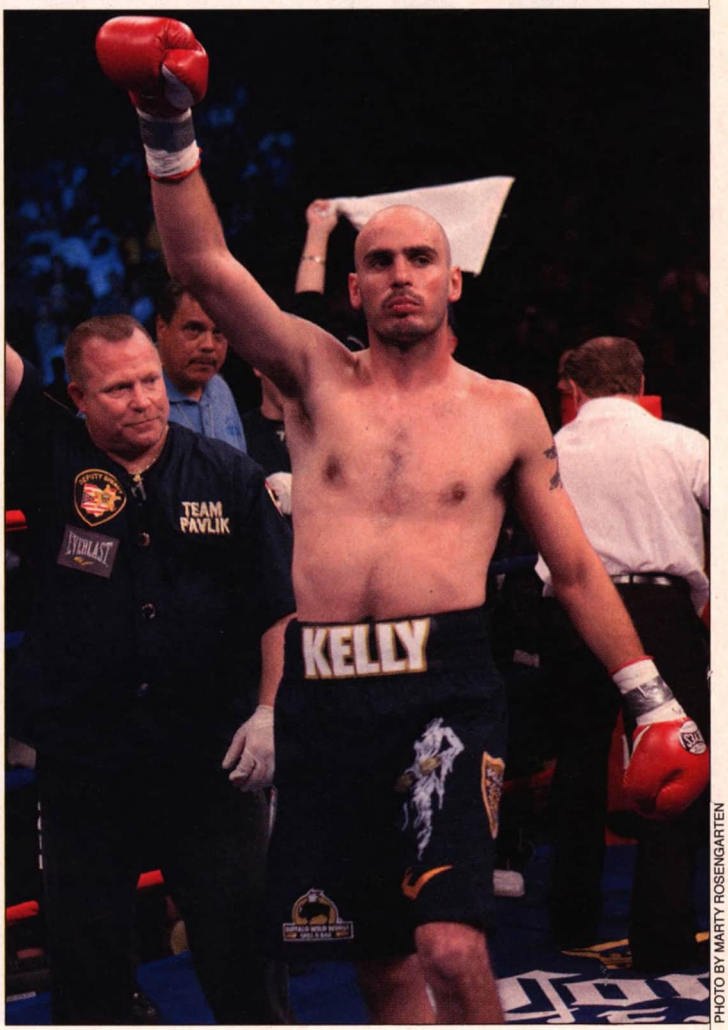



PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

***Can Pavlik regain his rep in 2009?***

By Ivan Goldman

# Statue Of Limitations

Five days before Oscar De La Hoya crashed his cash-gorged fight train into a Filipino mountain, he ensured the outcome by kicking Lady Luck in the teeth.

As anyone who's ever rolled dice with the gas money could have told him, Oscar, forget whatever you're doing now. Pick up the phone this instant and call off that 14-foot monument of you they're erecting in your hometown less than a week before you fight Manny Pacquiao. If you have to, hire yourself a midnight crane and supervise the job yourself. But get the giant dingus out of L.A.'s Staples Center plaza, under wraps, and into a basement where fate, fortune, destiny, and chance can't spot it. Because Oscar, putting that metallic jinx up there just before you strap on the gloves does something you never, ever want to do. Not only are you kicking Lady Luck in her pearly whites, you're telling her she ought to take off 10 pounds.

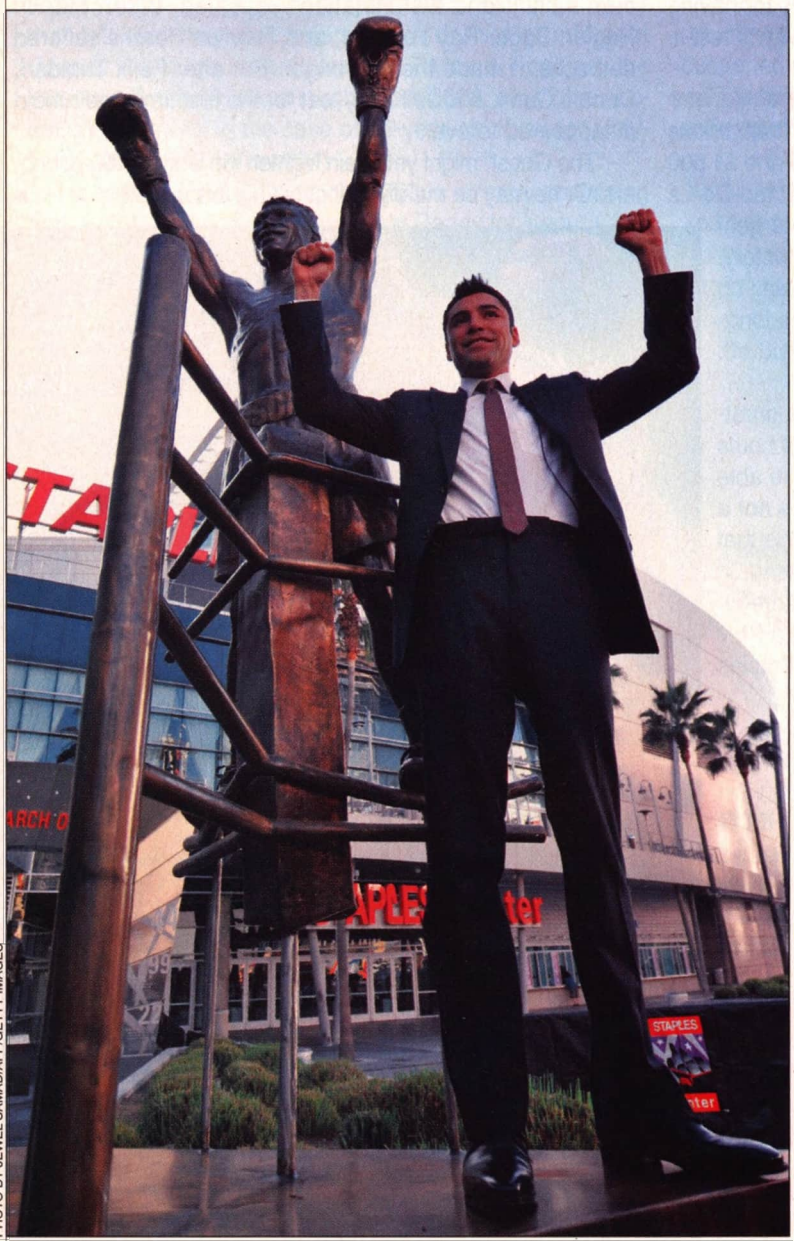



PHOTO BY JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Did bronze statue jinx Golden Boy?*

Also influencing the outcome may have been the fact that Pacquiao was a great fighter at the top of his game pitted against a formerly excellent fighter at the end of his road.

Incidentally, how many times did De La Hoya actually fight at Staples? Once. And he lost. Look it up: June 17, 2000, De La Hoya-Shane Mosley I. If they keep erecting statues of everybody who loses at Staples, they'll run out of space awfully soon, don't you think?

Both De La Hoya and Pac-Man looked like they had enough people in camp to staff separate aircraft carriers. But I couldn't help noticing that Oscar, in addition to his brother Joel, Nacho Beristain, Daniel Zaragoza, Angelo Dundee, Joe Chavez, the physical trainer, the conditioning trainer, the driver, the nutritionist, and that high school buddy of his from East L.A., also had an individual that HBO's *24/7* cameras showed pasting electrodes to his skin designed to carry "energy" from some less vital place on the fighter's body to another spot that would supposedly be more beneficial. A savage satirist might suggest that one of those latter locations could be Oscar's brain so maybe he'd think to question the value of said procedure.

But who knows? Maybe he'd have been twice as beat up without the jumper cables. Maybe there are also real vampires, leprechauns, abductions by extraterrestrials, a lost city of Atlantis, and virgins frequenting Las Vegas nightclubs. I can't disprove any of it. But as President Reagan used to say about the Soviets, trust but verify.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

*Primetime Pacquiao too much for De La Hoya*

Watching Pacquiao annihilate De La Hoya, I had a flashback to March 1994. At L.A.'s Olympic Auditorium I watched rising star Oscar stop southpaw Jimmi Bredahl in the 12th and final round to win his first alphabet title (130 pounds). Afterward, Oscar referred repeatedly and tediously to what a terrible experience it had been to fight a southpaw. You could have asked him how his love life was going and he'd probably reply, "Fine, if I stay away from southpaws."

So there was De La Hoya more than 14 years later, in against Pacquiao, the best fighter in the world who also happens to be a southpaw. Making him even more vulnerable, Oscar was in there without the warrior mentality that had pulled him through so many tough fights throughout the years. We can deduce this because on one of the prefight TV shows he blamed his 2007 loss to Floyd Mayweather on his then-trainer Freddie Roach. Freddie, Oscar said, gave him "the wrong game plan." That was a shocking, off-the-wall statement that could emanate only from a man whose thinking was utterly outside the mind-set required of a fighter.

Take even a chronic complainer like Bernard Hopkins. He bellyaches about judges, referees, promoters, writers, other

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*You can't blame Freddie this time*

fighters, the size of the purse, you name it. But once the bell rings he knows there are two guys in the ring plus a referee, and now it's all up to the two guys, period. You can't even conceive of him blaming a loss on his trainer. It's not the way true fighters think, and at age 44, Hopkins remains a true fighter. The man across from Pacquiao was, at age 35, a showman, a dealmaker, an athlete, a businessman, and plenty of other things, but he'd taken a radical turn away from his past as a warrior prince.

Speaking of trainers, referee Pat Russell theorized to me once that if the superbly gifted Oscar had found one really good trainer and stuck with him all these years "instead of going to all those celebrity trainers, he'd have been one of the all-time greats."

PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Arreola no Adonis*

**Arreola A Whale Of A Fighter:** Too bad it's Chris Arreola carrying the hopes of America on his shoulders because he's also lugging around 25 pounds of beer fat. The monkey pile of fighters from the old Soviet republics stacked atop the heavyweight division is, except for the formidable Klitschko brothers, like 1940 Belgium, vulnerable and waiting to be taken. Arreola appears to be the only American heavyweight on the horizon with a conceivable chance of taking advantage of this collection of flawed brutes. Hasim Rahman is shot, James Toney is fat and 40, and should I discuss John Ruiz? Nah.

The body of Arreola, 26-0 (23), a nice guy from Riverside, California, jiggles like pudding whenever he gets hit. Remember those old films showing shock waves ripple away from a nuclear blast? That's how it looks, and it ain't pretty.

When he stopped the decently talented Travis Walker in the third round in Ontario, California, Arreola weighed in at 254. Not much improved from his previous outing, when he nearly tipped the 260 mark. He used to come in around 230.

Against Walker, he gave up all pretense of moving his head and feet, which he'd tried to execute in some of his previous bouts. Lugging all that lard around, he's back to the future again, standing in front of his man and battling with all the finesse of a flat tire. At age 27, Arreola's getting worse instead of better. It's time to reach down for some self-control and stop doing whatever he's doing to put those extra pounds all over him. We can't pin the hopes of a nation on a pile of blubber.

The good news? Arreola is a gutsy, powerful, two-handed puncher, and if he'd show some intake discipline and listen to his trainer, Henry Ramirez, who instructs him to move side to side, he could make a lot of American fans happy.

**Williams On Track:** Yes, Verno Phillips is always a serious threat, but it seemed to me HBO's Bob Papa and Max Kellerman were overplaying his chances against formidable Paul Williams. Williams battled like a Terminator, adding power and a more blistering body attack to his speed and hyper-activity. Now that Margarito's famous enough to attract a decent purse for his opponent, Williams is the *new* Margarito—the welterweight nobody wants to fight.

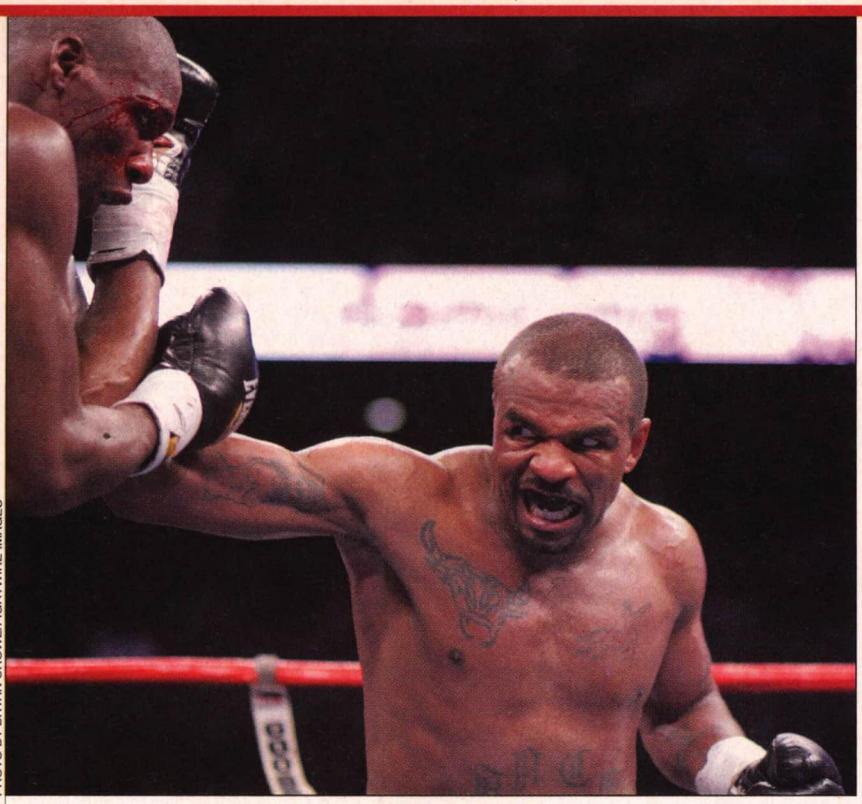


PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Phillips still good, but not good enough to beat Williams*

Let me tell you something about Phillips though. I interviewed him 14 years ago and he looks like he hasn't aged a day. I'll have whatever he's having.

**Garcia Out:** Armando Garcia left his job as executive director of the California commission in such a hurry he probably left a cup of hot coffee on his desk. I didn't even hear the standard comment about wanting to spend more time with his family. Inspectors Dean Lohuis and William Douglas are running things while jostling begins for Garcia's job in a state that may not get the biggest fights, but does get the most. I've heard it referred to as the club fight capital of America.

Two names already mentioned to replace Garcia are referees Pat Russell and Marty Denkin, along with Lohuis.

Everyone is being quiet about just what drove Garcia out in such haste. Newspapers around the state, decimated by low morale and round after round of layoffs, are barely aware a boxing commission exists, so there's been no serious press inquiry. Readers of this column had been apprized of Garcia's pettiness and other failings for some time.

Flash: California at last has an African-American referee, Wayne Hudspeth.

**Magoo:** Judge Julie Lederman, who bungled it 115-113 for Demetrius Hopkins against Kendall Holt in an easy contest to score—for Holt. He carried the fight and punched more effectively round after round. Fortunately, judges Alan Rubenstein (116-112) and Luis Rivera (117-111) saw it correctly, giving Holt the split decision. ■

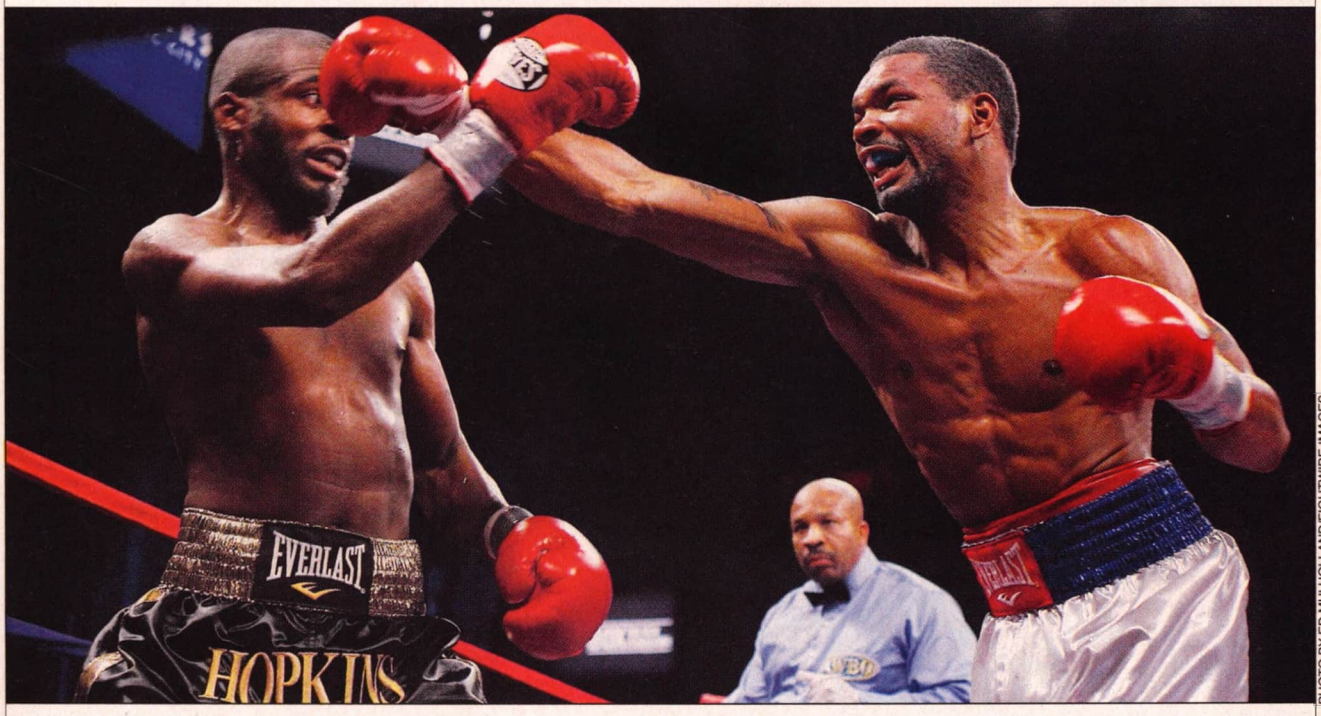



PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Holt should have been unanimous winner*

# [Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*If not for Fres Oquendo's boxing gloves giving away the subject matter, you might think this was a picture of James Toney doing something heroic like carrying a drowning man out of the ocean while both men were shirtless and wearing swim trunks. But alas, there's nothing heroic going on here. It's just two faded fighters striking a pose that pretty well sums up the state of the heavyweight division.*

*It looks like this could be a photo of two old foes posing together, but it's actually a shot of Hall of Famer Emile Griffith and his biographer, Ron Ross. The book is entitled* Nine ... Ten ... And Out! The Two Worlds Of Emile Griffith, *and interestingly, it was published by DiBella Entertainment. Guess we can add one more name to the list of champs Lou has promoted.*

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

*Rocky Balboa trained by banging away on beef ribs; Manny Pacquiao trains by doing curls with whole turkeys. We're not sure whether this Los Angeles crowd gathered more to catch a glimpse of the pound-for-pound king or to catch a free Thanksgiving bird, but either way, Pacquiao's poultry-pumping preparation paid off a couple of weeks later when he gobble-gobbled up Oscar De La Hoya.*

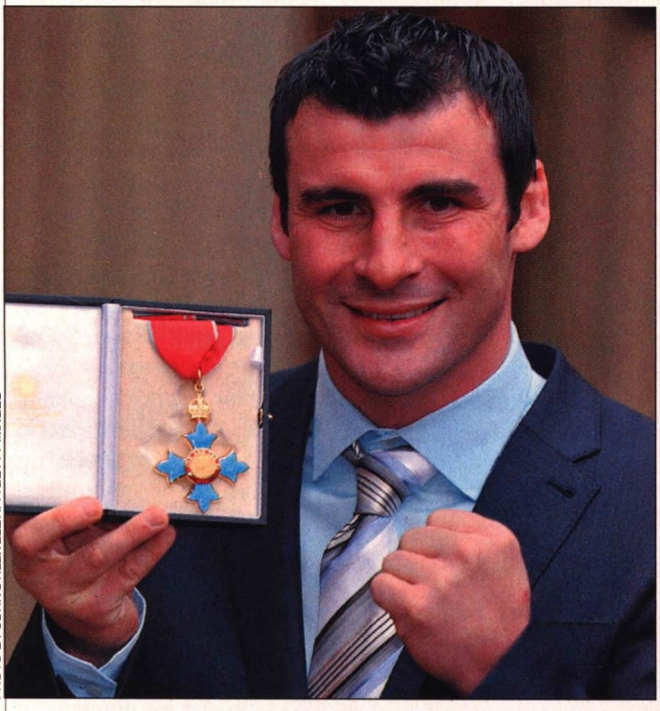


PHOTO BY JOHN STILLWELL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*It took a long time for Joe Calzaghe to get his recognition, but since he started getting it, it's just kept coming. The undefeated light heavyweight champ's latest honor came in the form of a CBE award for services to sport and voluntary services in Wales, presented to Calzaghe by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. About the only thing remaining is for Elton John to write a song about him, and Calzaghe will have officially done it all.*

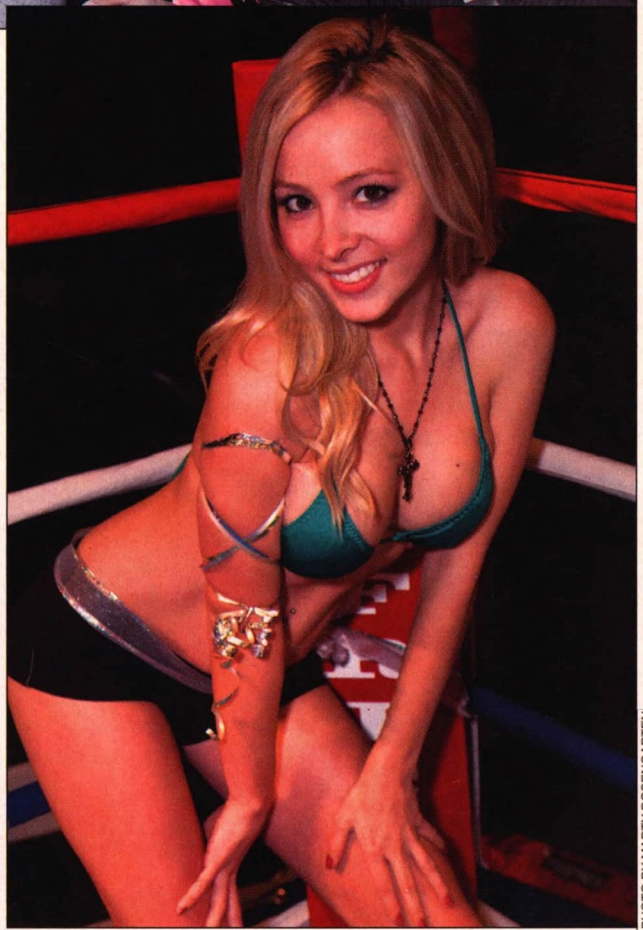


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

*See those ring ropes in the background? That's all the justification we need for running this picture in a boxing magazine. Our photographer got himself a pretty good angle, although it must be noted that if there was a photog outside the ring, just beyond the left edge of the photo, he would have been in a prime position as well.*

By David Mayo

# Daniel Jacobs Middleweight

Daniel Jacobs was in a hurry and Victor Lares just happened to be the unfortunate speed bump on a most important journey home.

It probably wouldn't have turned out much differently, even if Jacobs' newborn son hadn't been pulled from his arms three days before dispatching Lares with a second-round technical knockout on the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya undercard—and three hours before his New York-to-Las Vegas flight to keep that date—because the 13-0 (12) middleweight from the Brownsville section of Brooklyn already had emerged as one of boxing's hot prospects.

But it did happen that way. Jacobs had mere minutes to cradle his new family, then whisked away on a cross-country business trip.

In the aftermath of victory, Jacobs was most interested in resuming the afterglow of fatherhood.

"It was a wonderful experience because my longtime girlfriend had the baby December 3, and I was in the hospital from 2 o'clock that morning until 12:48 [p.m.], when my baby was born, and I had a flight that same day," Jacobs said. "So, thank God, He let me see my baby.

"I had about 10 minutes with my son before I had to leave. It was hard because I had to let him go, and he had to go to the nursery, and I had to leave. That was real hard on me. But I know that he knows that Daddy has a job to do. That kind of made me have a better outlook on the whole situation."

Jacobs and his girlfriend, Natalie Stevens, blended their first names and called their son Nathaniel. Someday, the youngster will hear the story of why Daddy left the day he was born.

"It's a beautiful event," Jacobs said, "but if there's no money generating, we're going to be hell out of luck."

Jacobs himself credits a strong family structure, from his mother, Yvette Jacobs, and grandmother, Cordelia Jacobs, for keeping him away from trouble when others in his neighborhood found it. When he first wandered into a boxing gym, at 14, and explained to Victor Rountree why he was there, the trainer knew he had a powerful personality on his hands.

## Pro Record

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2007** | | |
| Dec. 8 | Jose Jesus Hurtado, Las Vegas, NV | KO 1 |
| **2008** | | |
| Jan. 25 | Hector Lopez, Cicero, IL | KO 1 |
| Feb. 16 | Alexander Volkov, Las Vegas | KO 2 |
| March 22 | Matt Palmer, Cabazon, CA | KO 1 |
| April 19 | Leshon Sims, Las Vegas | KO 4 |
| May 3 | Jose Pena, Carson, CA | KO 1 |
| July 4 | Julio Perez, Hidalgo, TX | KO 1 |
| July 23 | Sergio Rios, Cabazon | KO 1 |
| Sept. 13 | Ramon Espinoza, Las Vegas | KO 1 |
| Sept. 27 | Emmanuel Gonzalez, Carson | W 6 |
| Oct. 18 | Tyrone Watson, Atlantic City, NJ | KO 1 |
| Nov. 8 | Jimmy Campbell, New York City | KO 3 |
| Dec. 6 | Victor Lares, Las Vegas | KO 2 |

| FIGHTS | WON | LOST | DRAW | KOs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 12 |

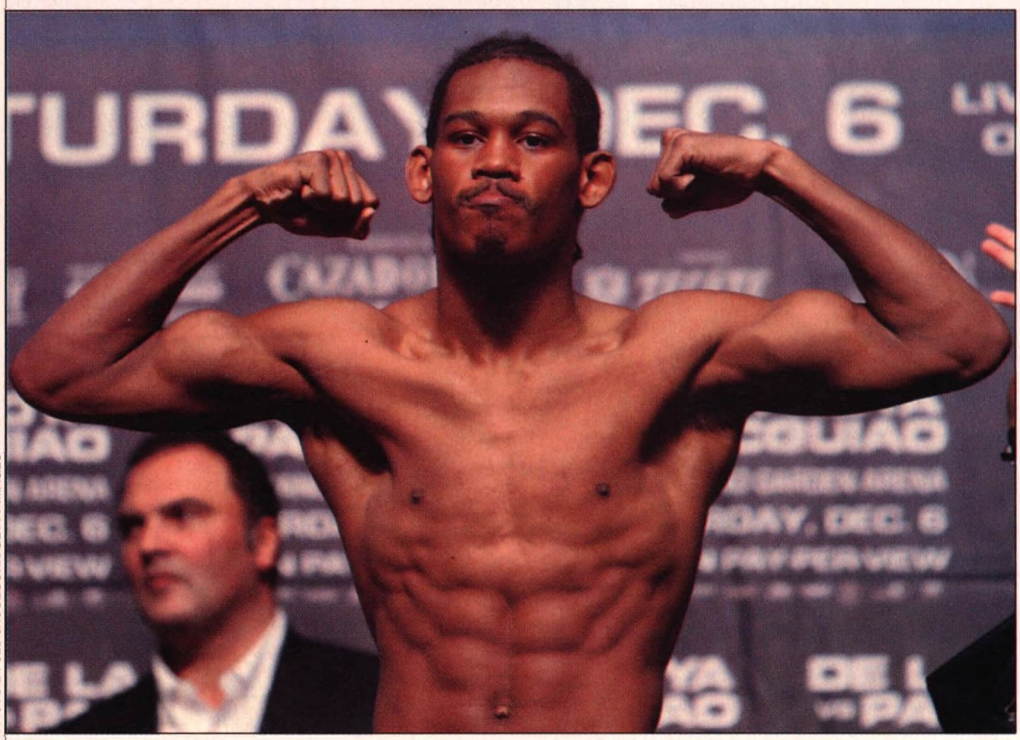


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

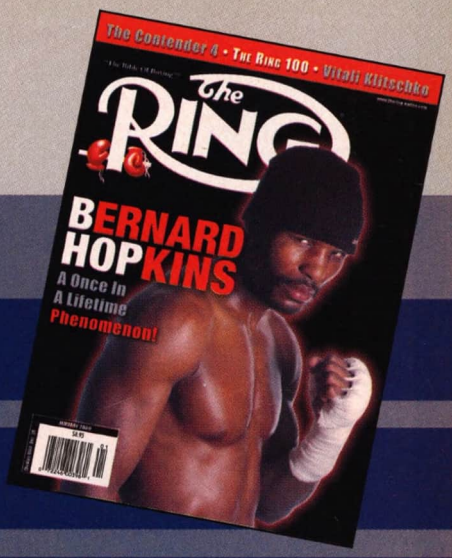
"I asked him, 'Daniel, why do you want to box?'" Rountree recalled. "And he said, 'Because I don't want to go to jail.'"

Jacobs found his way out at an age when most kids are still searching. He quickly won a 2003 Junior Olympics national title, then a junior world title. His street-dabbling days, to what limited extent they ever existed, were over.

"The reason I'm not a streets dude, I'm not a product of my environment, is because of my mom and my grandmother. And it just never fit me," Jacobs said. "I tried drugs before—I tried

*(Continued on Page 116)*

# The RING

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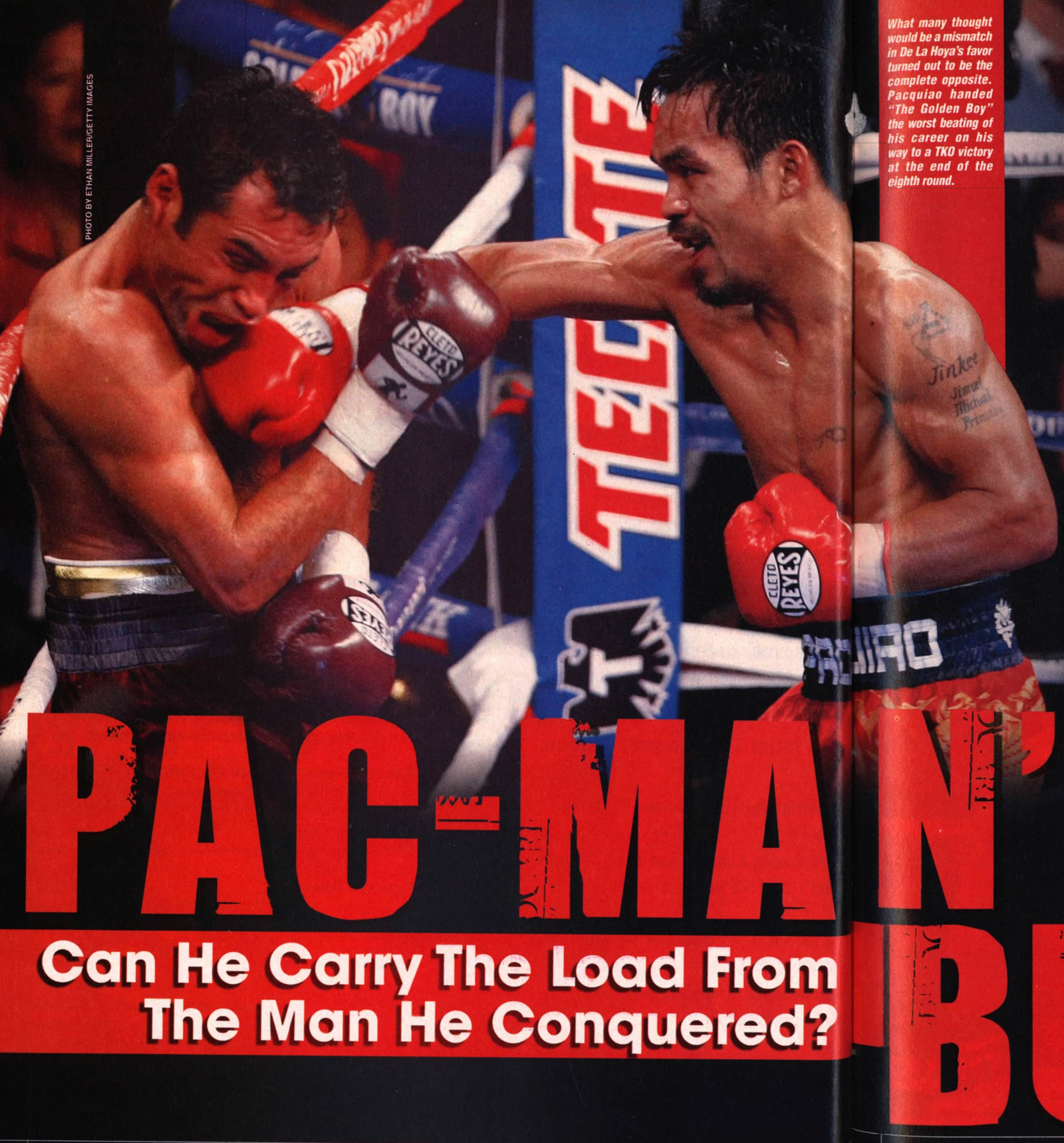


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*What many thought would be a mismatch in De La Hoya's favor turned out to be the complete opposite. Pacquiao handed "The Golden Boy" the worst beating of his career on his way to a TKO victory at the end of the eighth round.*

# PAC-MAN'S BURDEN

## Can He Carry The Load From The Man He Conquered?

By Nigel Collins

Watching Manny Pacquiao destroy Oscar De La Hoya, one was torn between the savage beauty of Pacquiao's performance and the pathos of De La Hoya's brutal demise. But as the immediacy of the carnage recedes and the larger implications move to the forefront, it becomes clear that beating De La Hoya was easy compared to Pacquiao's next challenge—attempting to carry boxing for the foreseeable future.

Even if the Siren song of the ring lures De La Hoya back between the ropes, it is obvious that boxing can no longer count on him to convert it from a fringe sport to a mainstream event on a semi-regular basis. Gone are the days when his golden presence was all that was needed to ensure a box-office bonanza. The post-De La Hoya era has begun, and regardless of whether we like it or not, life and the sport has moved on.

It would be both unrealistic and unfair to expect Pacquiao to be the "new De La Hoya." There's never been any fighter quite like "The Golden Boy" before and never will be another quite like him again. He is *sui generis*, a unique phenomenon whose crossover appeal pushed his popularity and earning power to rock-star proportions.

The pertinent question is how much of the void can Pacquiao fill. Moreover, will it be enough to keep boxing afloat, especially at a time when much of the world is undergoing an economic crisis far more frightening and far-reaching than the vicious beating he dealt De La Hoya?

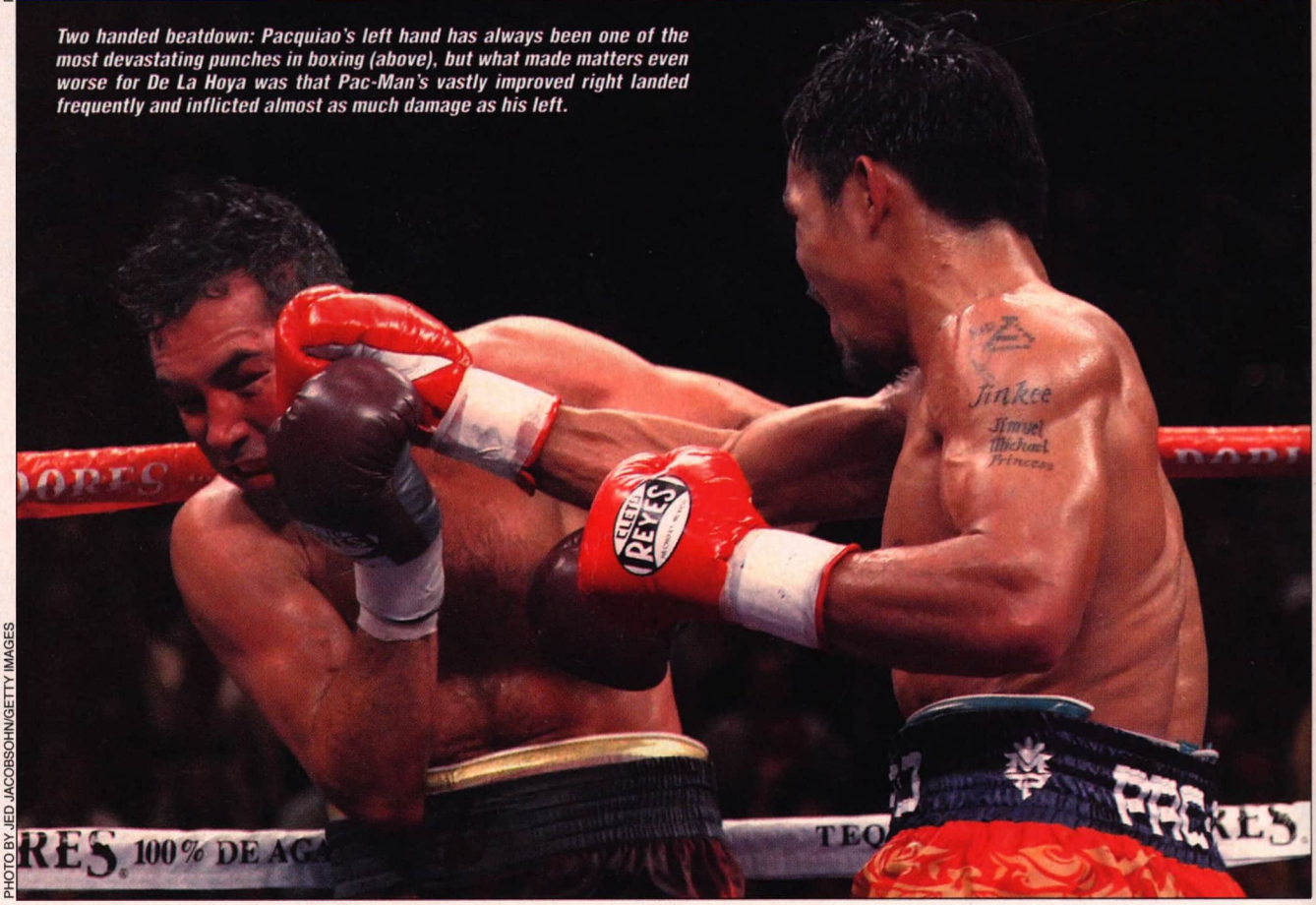
In many ways, we are fortunate to have Pacquiao as boxing's new standard-bearer. Although he is unlike De La Hoya in virtually every way from personality to fighting style, you would be hard-pressed to find another active candidate more suited to the task.

Pacquiao was already a superstar within the insular world of boxing before thrashing De La Hoya, but he woke up the next morning to a whole new reality. People who had never heard of him before were suddenly curious. "Who is this guy who had so thoroughly humbled De La Hoya?" they wanted to know.

Such is the transformative power of De La Hoya's celebrity, a boxer so famous that he is instantly recognized by people who have never seen a prize fight. But as his former conquerors, such as Shane Mosley, Bernard Hopkins, and Floyd Mayweather, have discovered,

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*Two handed beatdown: Pacquiao's left hand has always been one of the most devastating punches in boxing (above), but what made matters even worse for De La Hoya was that Pac-Man's vastly improved right landed frequently and inflicted almost as much damage as his left.*

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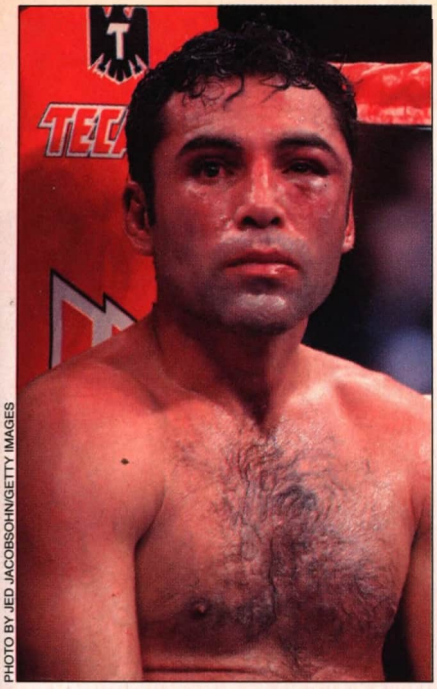


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

*A pensive-looking and battered De La Hoya sits on his stool staring into space. Taking on Pacquiao was a tremendous miscalculation that probably ended Oscar's career as one of the most popular fighters of all-time.*

beating De La Hoya doesn't make you De La Hoya.

Even so, if you're good enough, persistent enough, and have a strong enough persona, you can feed very well indeed at the margins of the mainstream celebrity, as Hopkins and Mayweather have demonstrated.

Pacquiao, however, has an opportunity to soar even higher than any of his contemporaries, due to a set of circumstances that favor his ascension, and his own unique qualifications. Let's start with the most obvious: Pacquiao's amazing fighting ability.

Those who insisted that he had little or no chance against De La Hoya due to the size disparity apparently have a very loose grasp of boxing history and only a superficial understanding of what makes a fighter great. It is not, as so many believed, about pounds and inches, but rather about the skill set and mental makeup of the man. The two cannot be separated; they are both an integral part of the whole.

Pacquiao is not only blessed with extraordinary athletic ability, after more than 50 professional fights, he is still eager to learn, as is evident by his steady improvement under the guidance of trainer Freddie Roach. The disciplined manner in which he carried out the fight plan against De La Hoya was the latest and most conspicuous proof of his progress, and made you wonder what other revelations are yet to come.

It is not, however, his ongoing technical development that makes Pacquiao so special. It's the swashbuckling, devil-may-care attitude in the ring that has endeared him to so many adrenaline junkies and devotees of the Manly Art.

And in addition to a devastating arsenal of punches he unleashes against his opponents with ruthless glee, Pac-Man has the rare ability to totally commit to the moment, a quality frequently lacking in even the best of his brethren.

Put it all together and you have an extremely fan-friendly package of mayhem that practically guarantees a bit of the old ultra violence every time Pacquiao fights. Naturally, winning is his number-one goal, but pleasing the paying customers is a close second.

This is no small thing in an era populated by so many hesitant performers, most of whom lack the passion to reach beyond themselves in search of

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*Happy Manny: A virtually unmarked Pacquiao acknowledges his fans after De La Hoya quit on his stool. The high-profile victory has elevated the Filipino sensation to a new level of stardom and positioned him on the cusp of mainstream fame in the United States.*

a greater glory. Pacquiao, on the other hand, happily pours everything he has into every fight, and come what might, walks away with no regrets.

It is safe to assume that a significant portion of the 1.25 million pay-per-view buys (roughly $70-million in revenue) that "The Dream Match" generated had a lot to do with the smiling assassin from half a world away. And although there seemed to be a few more De La Hoya fans among the announced crowd of 15,001 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, there were also thousands on Pacquiao fans on hand.

"Manny has a natural constituency of Filipino-Americans in the United States," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant, "and

# BIRTH OF A DREAM MATCH

There might never had been a Manny Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya fight if Larry Merchant hadn't planted the seed, which, cultivated by Freddie Roach, took root and grew into the biggest fight of 2008.

"Once every 10 years, I have a brainstorm that actually works," Merchant told THE RING. "It is less well-known that I suggested the first Shane Mosley-De La Hoya fight to Bob Arum. I did so because both Oscar and Shane have had a Los Angeles connection since their amateur days, and I thought it was a natural. But the Pacquiao-De La Hoya fight was different.

"Boxing was looking for a big event, and there was talk of a second Mayweather-De La Hoya fight, which didn't thrill me as I couldn't see it being much different than the first. I noticed when Pacquiao fought David Diaz that he was able to gain weight and not lose any of his speed and mobility, and thought, *Okay, something is happening here that could lead to something big.*"

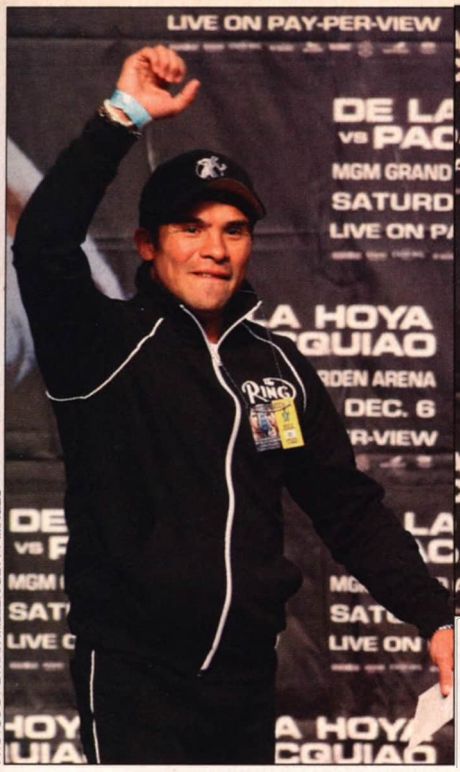
So how did Merchant feel seeing his fantasy come to life and play out on the big stage?

"I have an observer personality, and I'm not used to being in the middle of this sort of thing, but it was a great tickle for me. I recalled back when I was in Philadelphia a guy named Al Lewis was promoting a lightweight from South Carolina named Ray Lancaster. The next thing you new, Lancaster was fighting Len Matthews at the Convention Hall. The place was mobbed, and I remember the promoter looking at all the cars outside, beaming and calling it his "traffic jam." So I guess you could say that Pacquiao-De La Hoya was my traffic jam."

—N.C.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

***Although Merchant got the ball rolling, it was Roach who championed the cause***




PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*World lightweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez (left) and world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton showed up in Las Vegas for the Pacquiao-De La Hoya fight. Both want to fight the winner, but it seems that Hatton has the inside track.*

his fiery style has also earned the admiration of Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Latinos in general, who are the real base of boxing interest in the U.S."

Although appealing in his own right, Pacquiao is not Hollywood handsome like De La Hoya, and when he's in town you're far more likely to see him at the Wildcard Gym than Spago's. There is, instead, a down-to-earth accessibility about him that comes across as genuine. When Manny says he's happy to see you, you get the feeling he really means it.

Although they have their share of blowhards among the political and media class, the most treasured qualities among the Filipino people are humility and generosity, traits that permeate Pacquiao's personality. We have grown so accustomed to the remote celebrity of De La Hoya, the menace of Hopkins, and the self-aggrandizement of Mayweather that a humble warrior is a welcome change.

Ironically, the fighter who comes closest to Pacquiao in terms of his personality is the man he is most likely to share a ring with next, England's Ricky Hatton, another everyman who remains close to his roots regardless of the size of his bank balance.

Hatton was at the Pacquiao-De La Hoya fight, looking surprisingly slim despite the fact that he'd had two weeks since his dominant win against Paul Malignaggi to pack on the pounds.

"That's the first thing everybody says to me when they see me," joked Hatton, "that I look effin' skinny."

Maybe Hatton is obeying trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr.'s edict to lay off booze and fatty food. But whatever the story, the Manchester "Hitman" probably fancies his chances better against Pacquiao than he would have against the larger De La Hoya. Pacquiao weighed in at 142 for The Golden Boy, which is much closer to Hatton's natural fighting weight of 140 pounds than the welterweight limit of 147, where the Englishman has been less successful.

If the match is made and held in the UK, it has an excellent chance of filling any venue in the country, including the 90,000-seat Wembley Stadium. After all, Hatton's fight with Juan Lazcano packed Manchester City Stadium with more than 55,000 fans, and that was in the immediate aftermath of Ricky's crushing loss to Mayweather.

# A UNIFYING FORCE

The Aeta tribes people of the Philippines have hundreds of myths, legends, and various gods associated with their ancient culture, going back, some say, 1,000 years or more. Now, thanks to Manny Pacquiao's utter destruction of Oscar De La Hoya, another piece of folklore is assured for distant generations to hear and pass on into perpetuity.

"Pac-Man make Oscar surrender," said a smiling Luisito Laxamana, a young Aeta tribesman as he fiddled with the antennae atop his second-hand TV inside his half-finished concrete abode. "He make 'The Golden Boy' quit!"

The grainy TV showed action from the fifth round, but Laxamana and his various Aeta family and friends who were piled inside his barebones living room, already knew the shockingly fantastic result. It had come in the form of text messages on their cell phones two hours earlier. In a country with more cell phones per capita than any on earth, news such as, "Pac-Man Pounds The Golden Boy Into Submission!" travels fast, even to traditional tribes people like the Aeta.

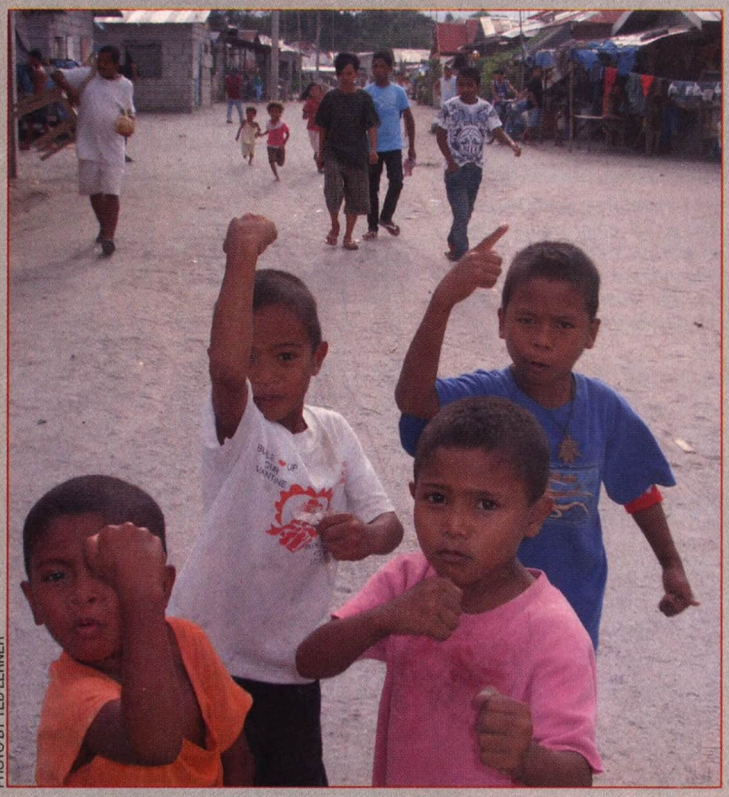


PHOTO BY TED LERNER

*Aeta boys imitate the national hero*

On this perfect Sunday afternoon, the Aeta predictably weren't lucky enough to have a local politician put up a big screen in the town square so they could watch "The Dream Match" live, as was the case in other towns throughout the Philippines.

Actually, these 80 or so Aeta families barely have a town. It's more like a makeshift settlement of small, half-finished concrete homes in the ashen fields below Mt. Pinatubo, behind the Clark Special Economic Zone, 70 miles north of Manila. Aetas have long lived on the fringes of Philippine society. Their darker skin, matted curly hair, short, almost pigmy-like stature, and adherence to their hunter-gathering ways has often led to discrimination and neglect by their fellow Filipinos.

But as is always the case all over this sprawling island nation, when Pacquiao fights, all disputes, grievances, bad intent, and class differences are erased for the moment. Pacquiao is every Filipino. And every Filipino is Pacquiao.

Even though they had to suffer through hours of seemingly endless commercials on free TV to actually confirm the miracle of surrender with their own eyes, the Aeta people couldn't have been happier, cheering at each fantastic combination landed by Pac-Man. When

If a Pacquiao-Hatton fight were held in the U.S., we can expect a vast contingency of Brits to make the pilgrimage and even more to watch at home on pay-per-view. When Hatton fought Mayweather in 2007, the U.S. PPV was a healthy 850,000, but that paled in comparison with the 1.4 millions buys generated in the UK. So regardless of the venue, Pacquiao-Hatton promises to be a major international attraction.

But the possibilities don't begin and end with Hatton. Lightweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez, who has drawn with and lost a controversial decision to Pacquiao, was also in Las Vegas the weekend of December 6, eager to stake his claim to a third crack at the Filipino whirlwind.

Pacquiao-Marquez III wouldn't be quite the moneymaker that Pacquiao-Hatton promises to be, but let's not forget that the second Pacquiao-Marquez fight sold approximately 400,000 PPVs, a record for a fight below the lightweight division. And of all of Pacquiao's opponents since he began fighting in the United States, "Dinamita" has given him his most demanding battles.

Then there is the tantalizing possibility that Mayweather will end his self-imposed and seemingly premature retirement, and try to regain the pound-for-pound title from the fighter who inherited the mantle when "Pretty Boy" abruptly announced he was hanging up his gloves in June 2008.

"If Mayweather chooses to come back, a fight with Pacquiao would be a huge event," said Merchant. "Most

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

*Tribal people celebrate Pac-Man's stunning victory*

De La Hoya quit—three hours after the actual result—the air filled with cheers, the brandy poured, and the native dancing began. On the gray, dusty lane outside, mostly empty the whole afternoon, grimy Aeta children ran up and down, pulling up in boxing poses, and flexing their arms into a muscle shouting "PAC-quiao!" Men spilled out of their homes to laugh it up. Even two old women held up their best boxing fist.

"I'd like to invite Pacquiao up to the mountains for a friendly scrap against an Aeta," one elderly man joked.

Their joy wasn't simply the result of another Pacquiao victory. Their hero had just smashed a boxing legend, made him surrender. These original Filipinos, marginalized but proud, had just seen a modern-day Filipino warrior conquer the world.

"Pac-Man is a hero to all Aeta people," Laxamana said. "We will never forget what he did today for the rest of time."

Considering the Aetas' ancient history and traditions, Pacquiao's superhero legacy is a lock in these parts for at least the next millennium.

**—Ted Lerner**

guys come back, but I can think of two instances in modern history when fighters walked away from millions of dollars: Marvin Hagler when he retired following his loss to Ray Leonard, and Lennox Lewis who retired instead of fighting a rematch with Vitali Klitschko. So it would be unusual if Mayweather doesn't come back, but not unprecedented."

Still, with or without Mayweather, Pacquiao, due to his ability to fight anywhere between 135 and 147 pounds, will not lack for lucrative opponents, which is another reason he is the best bet to prevent boxing from becoming a barren landscape in an Oscar-less future.

What is more, we already know that he will not be overwhelmed by the responsibility of leading the sport into a new tomorrow. Pacquiao has embodied the hopes and dreams of his impoverished nation for years and become all things to all Filipinos. Compared to that burden, the weight of being boxing's number-one attraction is a relatively light load. ■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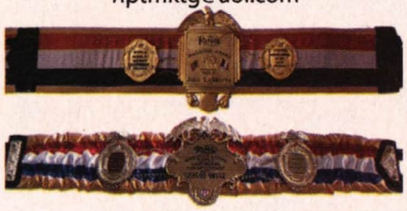

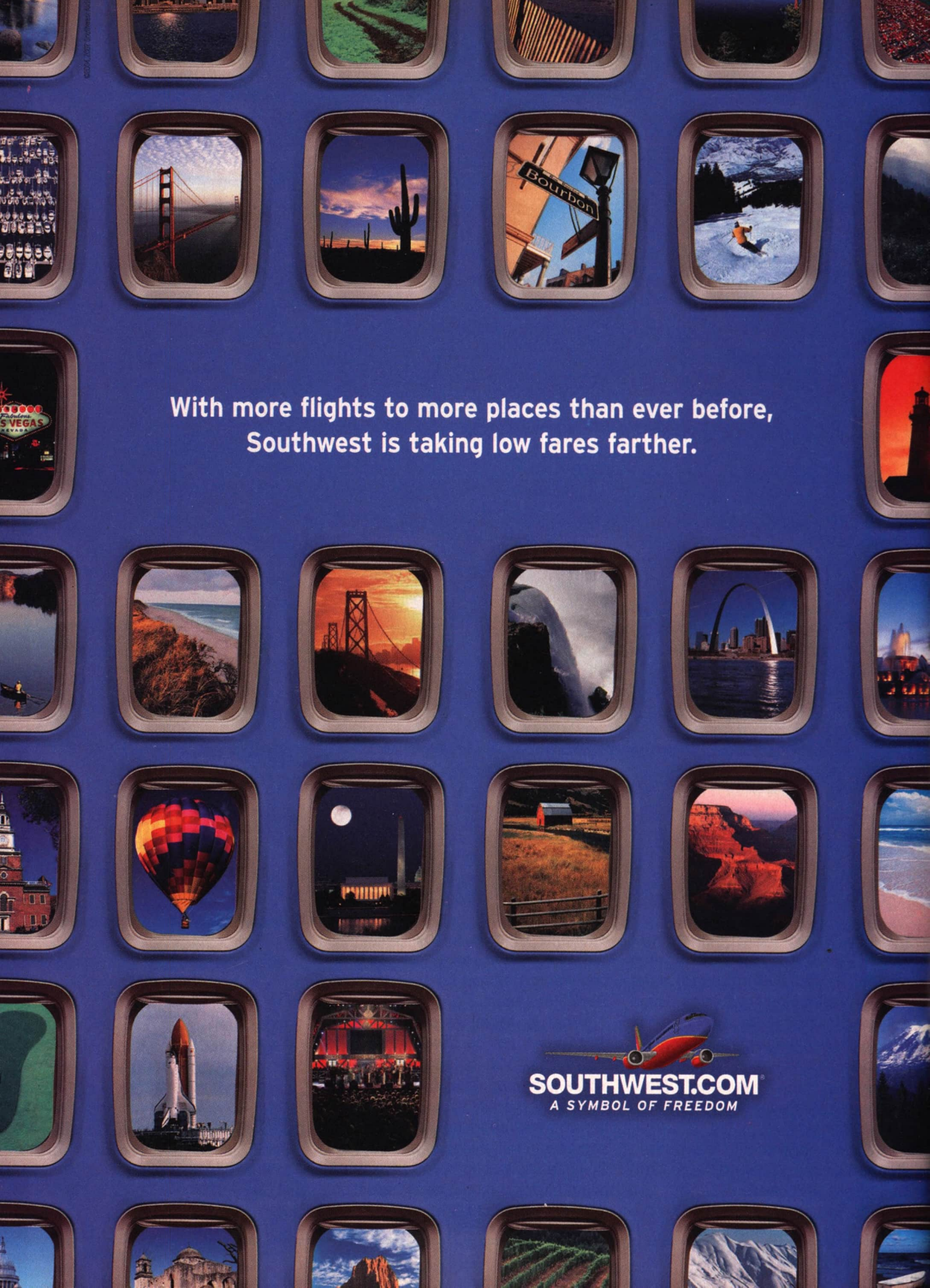
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# YEAR-END SPECTACULAR

## THE BEST OF 2008

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Joseph Santoliquito, Eric Raskin, William Dettloff, Don Stewart, Don Stradley, and Frank Krewda

Manny Pacquiao dominates this issue of THE RING—much the same way as Floyd Mayweather did in 2007—by winning his second Fighter of the Year award and also having his final bout of 2008 in December, so that both events are covered in the same issue. In fact, Pacquiao (who also won top honors in 2006), Mayweather (who won in '98), and Ricky Hatton (2005's winner) share a lot in common, not the least of which is that the trio have an excellent chance of sharing the ring together before '09 is over.

While the promise of a round robin between such a talented threesome is something to look forward to in the coming months, now is the time to celebrate the past—and '08 gave us plenty to commemorate. From the awe-inspiring third fight between junior featherweight world champion Israel Vazquez and archrival Rafael Marquez to the amazing rebirth of Bernard Hopkins and Vitali Klitschko, the Sweet Science enjoyed another terrific year.

It was also a year when the largest-grossing fight came during a crippling economic crisis, proving yet again that boxing consumers will respond positively, even under the most-dire circumstances, providing the sport delivers fights they want to see.

Despite it's numerous problems, many of which are self-inflicted, boxing is like a cork bobbing in the ocean: Regardless of how many times a wave threatens to sink it, the cork invariably pops back to the surface, buoyed by its innate ability to float.

Yes, there are times when boxing barely keeps its nose above water. But there are also instances when its intrinsic effervescence shoots the sport, like a Champagne cork, high into the firmament, beyond expectations, and into the realm of the truly magnificent. It is these moments and the men who provided them that the following pages are dedicated.

# FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

# MANNY PACQUIAO

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

The Henry Armstrong comparisons would be tiresome and annoying, if only they weren't so darned fitting. In other words, forgive us for joining in on what has already turned into a cliché, but from the blur-of-leather attack to the ability to render weight classes irrelevant, Pacquiao simply is this generation's "Homicide Hank." There's no better non-clichéd way to say it.

Of course, the purists will note that Armstrong held three legitimate world titles at the same time, something Pacquiao has not done and, in all likelihood, never will do. But there are things "Pac-Man" can boast of doing that Armstrong could not. Armstrong wasn't able to make war, bloodshed, and crime grind to a halt across an entire country just by stepping into the ring. Armstrong never released a music album or ran for public office. And much more to the point at this time of year in this magazine, Armstrong was not a two-time Fighter of the Year.

Pacquiao now is, and he joins a list a dozen names long—all of them in the Hall of Fame or headed there soon—of fighters who received THE RING's top annual distinction twice in a three-year span. The Filipino fireball was an easy choice in 2006, when he twice knocked out Erik Morales. And his selection was every bit as much of a no-brainer in '08, when he scored wins over two future Hall of Famers, won fights in three different weight divisions, participated in the most high-profile and most lucrative fight of the year, and won that fight by knockout despite coming in as the underdog. Oh, and he also climbed to the top of every pound-for-pound list. This year flat-out belonged to Manny Pacquiao.

And it topped his 2006 campaign on the strength of his exponential growth as both a fighter and an attraction in the last two years.

It's the former that counts more when awards season rolls around—the headline on this article doesn't read "Attraction Of The Year," after all. And it's also the former that is more atypical. To become a greater attraction as your career rolls on and your name becomes known in more households is natural. To still be improving as a pugilist at

# Honorable Mention

When he knocked out Miguel Cotto in a terrific fight in July, **Antonio Margarito** emerged as the frontrunner for Fighter of the Year. Not fighting again the rest of the year, however, put a dent in his chances. Still, he kayoed both Cotto and Kermit Cintron, rose to the top of the welterweight division, and became perhaps the most popular Mexican fighter around. Appropriately, it was the so-called "Mexicutioner," Pacquiao, who kept top honors out of reach for Margarito.

**Joe Calzaghe** claimed a runner-up spot for the third year in a row, thanks to a pair of wins over living legends. The super middleweight champ moved up and outworked Bernard Hopkins for the light heavyweight championship, then routed Roy Jones in his first defense. If the Welshman never fights again—a distinct possibility—this would be a highly satisfying way to go out.

If Pacquiao is the Fighter of the Year, what does that make **Juan Manuel Marquez**? He fought virtually even-up with Pacquiao in March, dropping a one-point split decision, then became the first man to knock out Joel Casamayor, claiming the world lightweight championship in the process.

Speaking of fighters whose chances were spoiled by close losses, **Bernard Hopkins** had a year for the ages (pun intended). The 43-year-old lost a split decision to Calzaghe, then bounced back by dishing out an old-school lesson to middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik, a man almost 20 years his junior.

Armenian-Australian badass **Vic Darchinyan** was at his destructive best in 2008, scoring knockouts of Dimitri Kirilov and the pound-for-pound rated Cristian Mijares. And for what it's worth, Darchinyan's February draw against Z Gorres is widely regarded as a decision that should have gone "The Raging Bull's" way.

*Margarito came into his own in 2008*

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

age 29, to be unveiling new dimensions of your game with each fight a decade after winning your first title, is decidedly more rare. But that's precisely what Pacquiao, with the help of trainer Freddie Roach, has done, both offensively and defensively. Just ask Oscar De La Hoya.

Pacquiao has long boasted the finest left-hand powerpunch in the sport, but he wasn't always a world-class defensive fighter. He is now. The twin keys to his victory over De La Hoya were the fact that he couldn't seem to miss "The Golden Boy" and the fact that Oscar couldn't land cleanly when confronted with Pacquiao's upper- and lower-body movement. For everyone wondering why De La Hoya stopped "pulling the trigger" after a couple of rounds, it wasn't really because he *couldn't*; it was because he recognized the futility in trying and had been mentally defeated by his opponent's defensive prowess.

That same upgraded ability to slip punches was on display in Pacquiao's June victory over David Diaz. According to CompuBox, Diaz and De La Hoya combined to land only 173 of 865 punches against Pacquiao, exactly 20 percent. It is often said about great offensive fighters that their offense is their defense. Pacquiao has that going for him, but he also now boasts a defense that works pretty well on its own. And, to his great credit, Pacquiao has sharpened his skills without sacrificing any of the thrills he has consistently produced for years.

Along the way, Pacquiao has emerged as a major attraction. All three of his fights in 2008 were on pay-per-view—not ideal for a fighter's exposure, but a clear sign that he's "made it" in the modern boxing business. His March

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Tens of Thousands of Filipinos line the streets of Manila to welcome their national idol after Pacquiao TKO'd De La Hoya.*

rematch with Juan Manuel Marquez generated approximately 400,000 buys in the U.S., extraordinary numbers for two foreign-born junior lightweights. Pacquiao's June fight with Diaz produced roughly 250,000 buys, a tremendous total for a blatant mismatch. And the December "Dream Match" against De La Hoya reached 1.25 million homes, earning it a spot among the all-time PPV top 10. Given the current economic climate, that's a monumental accomplishment.

In all, Pacquiao's three fights sold 1.9-million pay-per-views and generated just over $100-million in total domestic TV revenue.

Action hero. Box office hero. Pound-for-pound king. Fighter of the Year. For Pacquiao, there's no end in sight to the superlatives. And if he keeps this up much longer, nobody will be calling him the Henry Armstrong of his time. We'll be calling Armstrong the Manny Pacquiao of *his* time. ■

## Manny Pacquiao: The Year That Was

*The man who reigned as pound-for-pound king until his retirement announcement in June of this year, Floyd Mayweather, took a lot of abuse from the boxing community for ducking his most compelling challenges. The man who took over as P-4-P champ following Mayweather's abdication could never possibly be accused of any such thing. Win or lose (and for the most part, all he does is win), Pacquiao just keeps taking on the biggest names and toughest opponents possible.*

*(Okay, so he slips in a David Diaz from time to time too. But given the supreme tests with which he surrounded that gimme, you can see why the boxing world might cut him some slack.)*

**W 12 Juan Manuel Marquez, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 15, 2008:** The rematch to a 2004 Fight of the Year candidate produced another rousing battle, and again there wasn't much separating Pacquiao and Marquez. When Manny went on the offensive, he generally won the round; when he tried to play the role of boxer against perhaps the most technically precise pugilist on the planet, he generally lost the round. It was back and forth the whole way, neither man ever seeming to take a lead of more than two points, and both warriors making their cutmen earn their paychecks.

The difference, ultimately, was Pacquiao's edge in one-punch power. A left hand that Marquez never saw (isn't that the case with most lefts from Pac-Man?) produced a knockdown in round three, and that shaped the final result. Jerry Roth had it 115-112 for Marquez, but Duane Ford and Tom Miller had it 115-112 and 114-113, respectively, for Pacquiao, who left the Mandalay Bay Events Center with THE RING junior lightweight championship.

**KO 9 David Diaz, Las Vegas, Nevada, June 28, 2008:** Great as he's been over the years, Pacquiao has his imperfections and they generally surface at some point in his fights. Not on this night. As far as his performance against Diaz in the Mandalay Bay ring went, Pacquiao was utterly flawless. The only imperfection, from a fan's perspective, was in the selection of Diaz as an opponent against whom Pacquiao could cherry-pick the WBC lightweight belt.

Pacquiao battered the slower Diaz as he pleased, sliced him up, and could have been awarded 10-8 rounds without knockdowns in both the second and eighth. The Filipino kept firing until an anvil of a left hand planted Diaz on the mat and led ref Vic Drakulich to stop the fight without a count at 2:24 of the ninth.

**KO 8 Oscar De La Hoya, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 6, 2008:** Pacquiao went straight from one perfect performance into another—but for "The Dream Match" at the MGM Grand, the opponent was no patsy. Rather, De La Hoya was favored to win the fight, many even labeling it a mismatch in favor of "The Golden Boy" because of the size differential. Pacquiao upsetting the odds and winning was a major accomplishment; that he did so in a fight every bit as

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*Pacquiao fought a perfect fight against "The Golden Boy"*

one-sided as his destruction of Diaz was a revelation.

Size turned out to be a non-factor. Pacquiao weighed 142 officially and 148½ unofficially on fight night, compared to 145 and just 147 for De La Hoya. The most significant numbers turned out to be their ages—a prime 29 for Pacquiao, a fading 35 for De La Hoya—and the size factor took a backseat to the speed factor.

Southpaw Pacquiao, General Santos City, Philippines, scored first with a straight left that split the guard and set the tone, and his bobbing and weaving frustrated De La Hoya, East Los Angeles, California, from the outset. Pacquiao's straight lefts landed repeatedly, causing The Golden Boy's left eye to swell, and the fight was as good as over when the prefight underdog drew gasps with a scorching double left early in the fourth. By the end of the round, De La Hoya was backing up and embarrassment was setting in.

It was impossible not to feel for De La Hoya in the seventh, when he could do no more than retreat to the ropes and cover up. Oscar showed a solid chin and plenty of heart, but he simply wasn't offering any offense and had become a sad, swollen sight. It was an obvious 10-8 round without a knockdown, and in the corner, referee Tony Weeks told De La Hoya, "You don't throw more punches, I'm gonna stop it." The eighth round looked awfully similar to the seventh, and on the stool afterward, De La Hoya, 39-6 (30), was non-responsive to his corner's inquiries about whether they should stop it. The lack of a response was good enough to convince them to do the right thing.

Pacquiao advanced to 48-3-2 (36) with the win, and though there were no welterweight titles at stake, the fight couldn't have made a more emphatic pronouncement regarding where the pound-for-pound title resides.

# FIGHT OF THE YEAR

## ISRAEL VAZQUEZ-RAFAEL MARQUEZ III

For the second year in a row, Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez swept aside the competition and earned THE RING's Fight of the Year honors, a feat that puts them in the company of some illustrious pairings. Rocky Graziano-Tony Zale won consecutive honors from THE RING in 1946 and '47, Carmen Basilio-Ray Robinson won the same accolade in 1957 and '58, and Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti were back-to-back winners in 2002 and '03.

The scorecards of the March bout were indicative of how closely matched these two are, with judge Max DeLuca seeing it for Vazquez, 114-111, while judge Tom Kaczmarek saw it 114-111 for Marquez. Judge James Jen-Kin cast his score for Vazquez, 113-112, making Vazquez the winner by split decision. Such a disparity in scores would usually attract attention, but many of the rounds were so close that Kaczmarek could build a case for having Marquez comfortably ahead. (The scoring reminded us of an urban legend surrounding one of the Robinson-Basilio fights. Allegedly, the referee noticed one of the judges whacking his first two fingers on his chair. When asked what he was doing, the judge said the rounds were so close he didn't know who to give them to. If his index finger tingled, he scored the round for Basilio; if his middle finger tingled, he'd score it for Robinson. By the end of the fight, the judge was still whacking his fingers on the chair, and the other judge was doing it too.)

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Vazquez overtakes Marquez in the closing moments of an epic struggle*

The Home Depot Center in Carson, California, where the Vazquez-Marquez trilogy began, was the site of the rubber match. Attendance was up from their first bout, 12 months earlier, when only 5,155 turned out. But Vazquez-Marquez III drew a capacity crowd of more than 8,000, including a smattering of celebrity fans. Vazquez was defending THE RING magazine junior featherweight championship, along with the WBC belt, which he'd regained from Marquez last year.

# Honorable Mention

Vazquez-Marquez III took place on March 1, which began a terrific month for boxing. Just two weeks later, **Manny Pacquiao** and **Juan Manual Marquez** engaged in a rematch of their 2004 draw. Once again, these two fought like wolves and gave Las Vegas fans a fight to remember, won by Pacquiao via split decision.

On March 22, reigning lightweight champion **Joel Casamayor** and gutsy Australian **Michael Katsidis** engaged in a seesaw battle, with Katsidis rising from two first-round knockdowns to slam his way back into the fight, sending Casamayor through the ropes in the sixth. Casamayor beat the count and stopped the Aussie in round 10.

March 28 saw lightweights **Jose Reyes** and **Ivan Valle** put in their own bid for Fight of the Year. Both fighters hit the canvas multiple times before Reyes kayoed Valle at 0:24 of the fourth.

**Chad Dawson** was rocked several times by former world champion **Glen Johnson** during their April light heavyweight bout, but he landed enough rapid combinations to earn a controversial but unanimous 12-round decision.

In July, two of the era's top welterweights, **Antonio Margarito** and **Miguel Cotto**, thrilled fans at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Cotto boxed beautifully for several rounds, but Margarito gradually broke him down and scored a dramatic 11th-round TKO.

**Jorge Arce**'s ninth-round stoppage of **Rafael Concepcion** wowed Mexico City fans in September, reestablishing junior bantam Arce as one of the sport's best little men.

Many boxing fans were upset when Telefutura announced plans to cancel its long-running Friday night boxing series, but *Solo Boxeo* aired one last classic, the November 7 clash between featherweights **Rogers Mtagwa** and **Tomas Villa**, won by Mtagwa in the 10th by TKO.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Adamek and Cunningham mix it up in cruiser classic***

Nottingham, England, was the location of **Carl Froch**'s unanimous decision over **Jean Pascal** in December. The free-swinging bout was for the vacant WBC super middleweight belt, and saw both fighters test each other's chins repeatedly.

**Tomasz Adamek** defeated **Steve Cunningham** in another December epic to claim the vacant RING cruiserweight championship. Adamak survived many sustained assaults from Cunningham throughout the bout, but put Cunningham on the canvas three times to earn a split decision on Versus.

Then there was the explosive heavyweight slugfest between **Chris Arreola** and **Travis Walker**. Walker knocked Arreola to his knees in the second, but Arreola knocked Walker down twice before that round ended. The finish came early in the third when Arreola cracked Walker with a perfect left hook to the chin. When it was over, a dazed Walker was consoled by a cornerman, who said, "Remember Hagler and Hearns? Well, tonight you were Tommy."

The battle was waged with the same intensity that has made this series the jewel in the crown of Showtime boxing. Marquez had a slight edge during the early rounds, knocking Vazquez down during the heated fourth, and causing him to bleed heavily from the nose and above the eyes. Vazquez, though, was steadily gaining ground, blasting Marquez with right hands and left hooks. During the 10th, Marquez was penalized one point for a low blow, but that was the least of his concerns: His left eye was nearly swollen shut, and Vazquez was building momentum.

Vazquez stormed out for the final round and pressured Marquez like a trash compactor, landing a series of blows in the bout's final seconds that sent Marquez tottering backward into a corner. Marquez would have landed in the front row had the ropes not supported him. Referee Pat Russell correctly ruled a knockdown, despite disapproval from the dazed, half-blind Marquez.

The point deduction and the knockdown saved the fight for Vazquez, sparing a trio of judges from whacking their fingers or flipping coins to appoint a winner.

Marquez and promoter Gary Shaw groused during the bout's aftermath, threatening to file a protest over Russell's calls, but not even a temporary case of sour grapes could dampen the magnificence of the 2008's Fight of the Year. ■

# ROUND OF THE YEAR

## ISRAEL VAZQUEZ-RAFAEL MARQUEZ III, ROUND 4

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

***Marquez floors Vazquez in thrilling fourth***

One man seemingly in control, only to be hurt the next second in a fight either guy is capable of ending at any moment. If those thrilling final 70 seconds of Round Four didn't define the entire Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez trilogy, they certainly reflected it.

The first two minutes were tame by Vazquez-Marquez standards. Marquez continued to expertly work one of the best jabs in the sport while circling to his left, away from the hook that dropped him in Vazquez' sixth-round kayo win seven months before their May rubber match. Vazquez also snapped his jab, but struggled to get in close enough to land powershots with authority. When Vazquez got close, Marquez fired a hook or a quick combination, then re-established his range. The pace was unrelenting.

For the most part, it was the formula for the first three rounds. Vazquez had gotten through and stunned Marquez on a couple of occasions, but the former champ was clearly leading early. There wasn't a dull moment, but there was also a feeling that Marquez couldn't keep his distance forever, that the warrior in him would emerge and an already brutal bout would rise to another level.

Referee Pat Russell stepped in briefly with 1:15 to go

# Honorable Mention

It took a special three minutes to edge out the first round of the July rematch between junior welterweights **Kendall Holt** and **Ricardo Torres**, who provided more action in 61 seconds than many pay-per-view cards serve up in an entire offering. Torres caught Holt with a right hook for a flash knockdown 11 seconds into the fight, then dropped him again with a left hook 21 seconds later as the two flurried. Holt got right back up again and took a left hook, but came off the ropes with a left to the body that brought Torres' head down. Holt accidentally headbutted Torres' jaw, driving him into the ropes, where Holt connected with a big right hand that left Torres slumped over and unconscious.

Holt-Torres II didn't provide the year's only knockdown-crazy first round. Lightweights **Jose Reyes** and **Ivan Valle** waged a shootout in March that saw six knockdowns before Reyes ended it in the fourth. The first round set the tone, as Reyes dropped Valle twice with left hooks, only to get floored himself with a counter left.

In June, lightweight **Amir Khan** got all he could handle from Ireland's **Michael Gomez**, especially in a thrilling second round. After being floored in the first, Gomez came back in the second to drop Khan with a left. Khan battled back and opened up a cut above Gomez' left eye in the round. Khan went on to stop Gomez in the fifth.

Rising heavyweight **Chris Arreola** showed some heart in November, when he rallied in the second round against **Travis Walker**. Walker dropped Arreola with a straight right early. Arreola withstood the follow-up flurry, hurt Walker with a right hook, and then put him down with a counter left followed by a right. Walker got up and was promptly dropped again by a right hook-left hand. Arreola finished Walker off 13 seconds into the third.

**Steve Luevano** and **Mario Santiago** took turns dropping each other in the second round of their featherweight thriller on the Manny Pacquiao-David Diaz undercard in June. Santiago put Luevano down to a knee with an overhand left, only to get knocked down with a left from Luevano seconds later. The fight somehow went the distance and ended in a draw.

Junior middleweights **Alfredo Angulo** and **Richard Gutierrez** provided a fantastic finish to their entertaining May encounter. In the fifth round, Gutierrez hurt Angulo badly with a sudden left hook as Angulo worked the body. Angulo survived the onslaught, recovered, then hurt Gutierrez with a counter right midway through, leading to a stoppage 12 seconds before the bell.

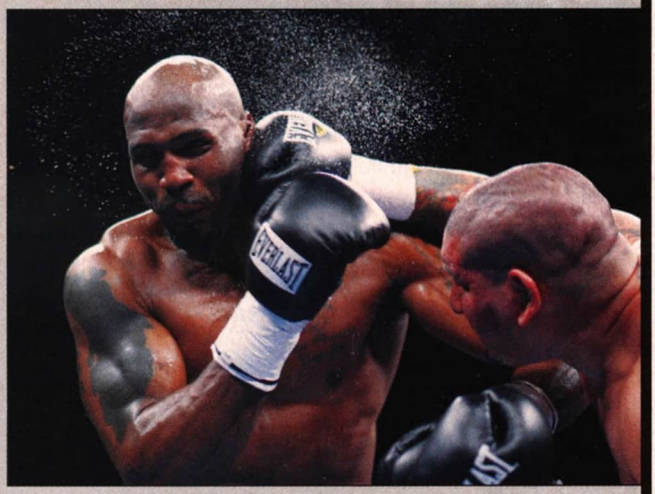



PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Arreola storms back with a right***

in the round after an accidental clash of heads. Vazquez touched his left eye with his glove, checked for blood, then went right back after Marquez, who threw two jabs, then a right cross to the jaw over Vazquez' guard that spun the champion's head.

Hurt, Vazquez backed up for possibly the first time all night. Marquez sensed wounded prey and went right at Vazquez, who stood his ground and fired three bodyshots. They didn't slow Marquez, who rattled off an eight-punch volley, with a right to the head putting Vazquez on the seat of his trunks. It was the first time he'd been down in the trilogy.

Vazquez got right back up at the count of four. He nodded with a wan expression as Russell completed the standing eight-count, then went right back at Marquez, who was now attacking in hopes of ending it. That only played into the hands of Vazquez, like a hockey team getting a shorthanded breakaway after an aggressive opponent over-commits on the power play.

Vazquez immediately connected with a left hook to the body, then scored with three straight rights to the face that had Marquez reeling backward toward the ropes. Marquez planted himself and dug in to trade, only to eat a right hook-left hook combo upstairs. Marquez momentarily backed off and jabbed, but then buried his head into Vazquez' chest and went back to inside trading 25 seconds before the bell.

The two swapped combos for 10 seconds before Marquez backed up for some space, then landed a hard right to the head off a pair of jabs. Vazquez came forward, missed with a pair of hooks, and then ate a perfect jab from Marquez. Marquez backed Vazquez off with a couple more jabs before landing another right to the chin that momentarily buckled Vazquez' knees. Showing no regard for pain, Vazquez came right back with a right cross that rocked Marquez. The two traded another combination before the bell.

Within a 12-month span, Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez gave all of themselves for almost 25 unforgiving, unforgettable rounds. The fourth round of their third fight was clearly one of the best. ■

# KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

## EDISON MIRANDA KO 3 DAVID BANKS

Anyone who was surprised that Edison Miranda took out David Banks at 1:58 of the third round of their January 11 match probably hadn't paid much attention to the careers of either man.

After all, Miranda, despite suffering a knockout loss to Kelly Pavlik, was a battle-tested fighter with proven punching power, while Banks was a potentially decent fighter whose greatest accomplishments had been a pair of decisions over Elvin Ayala and a stint on the third season of *The Contender.* Plus, Miranda was fighting at 170, a weight he claims is much more natural for him, while Banks, who'd rarely strayed beyond 164 pounds in his career, had moved up.

To say "Pantera" enjoyed a power and experience advantage over Banks would be 2008's Boxing Understatement of the Year. Accordingly, several prognosticators predicted a Miranda kayo in the early to mid-rounds.

Still, none of that logic prepared viewers for Banks' dramatic dénouement after being caught with a right to the jaw. The

*Miranda's right-hand bomb drapes Banks over the ropes*

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

# Honorable Mention

**Al Seeger** apparently felt clinching would offset **Yuriorkis Gamboa**'s lethal power, yet Gamboa starched Seeger with a single, crushing right while backing out of a clinch at 2:40 of the first in their July featherweight bout.

After overcoming two headbutts from **Javier Castillejo**, German middleweight **Sebastian Sylvester** delivered a 12th-round kayo of the Spaniard. With less than two minutes remaining, Sylvester uncorked a textbook 1-2. The jab stopped Castillejo cold, and the right put him to sleep.

Slightly more controversial was junior welter **Kendall Holt**'s knockout of **Ricardo Torres** in their August rematch. Thirteen seconds in, Holt hit the canvas. Seconds later, he was down again. Holt collected himself and dug a left to Torres' body that led to an accidental clash of heads as the pair leaned in simultaneously. Dazed, Torres stayed on the ropes until a Holt right sent him to the deck and forced a halt.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*The ref pulls Holt away from the helpless Torres*

Nothing controversial about cruiser champ **David Haye**'s stoppage of **Enzo Maccarinelli** in March. Both fighters looked reluctant to commit to powershots until a Haye right sent Enzo reeling in the second round. Haye followed up with a two-fisted flurry, punctuated by another right that floored Maccarinelli for a kayo at the 1:55 mark.

Fans that tuned in to watch ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* on April 23 witnessed a spectacular knockout. In the fourth, junior welter **Juan Urango** had **Carlos Vilches** against the ropes. He threw a left that missed. But before Vilches could react, Urango connected with a right hook that seemed to move at the speed of light. Vilches' face contorted and he was on the canvas in a flash.

**Braedis Prescott** wasted no time in solving **Amir Khan** in a battle of undefeated lightweights in September. After scoring with both hands, Prescott dropped Khan with a left hook that left the former Olympian lying against the turnbuckle pad. Khan beat the count, but was hurt, and Prescott closed the show with another left at 0:54.

**Juan Manuel Lopez** spent even less time taking care of **Caesar Figueroa** in October. Just 47 seconds into the fight "Juanma" landed a lead-fisted 1-2 that sent the Mexican face-first to the mat. This was the second in a string of three consecutive first-round knockouts for the junior featherweight sensation.

In December, junior welterweight **Jason Cintron**'s kayo of **Pascali Adorno** showed that Kermit isn't the only Cintron possessing one-punch power. In the second, Adorno and Cintron were pawing at each other when Cintron stepped in and landed a right hook that snapped Adorno's head back with grotesque force. Adorno fell as if a sniper had picked him off. Several attempts at regaining his feet were in vain (he couldn't even *sit* up). Eventually, his seconds returned Adorno to his stool.

impact sent Banks drooping at an awkward pitch that deposited his upper body through the second and third ropes while his legs and feet remained in the ring. After delivering the blow, Miranda did one of those about-faces that says, *Don't bother counting, he ain't gettin' up.*

Banks, while ostensibly performing an impromptu inventory of his faculties, bobbed rhythmically on the bottom two ropes for several seconds before getting to his feet and making a spaghetti-legged trek to his stool.

Miranda's strategy was evident from the outset: jab into position to deliver one of his jolting right hands. For two rounds, Banks smartly circled away from the Colombian's powerpunch and even managed to land an occasional counter right of his own.

In the third, Banks' footwork slowed and he went down. Referee Tellis Assimenios ruled that it was a slip, but the fall looked to be the result of a Miranda bodyshot. From that point, Miranda threw his jab more regularly. Eventually, he walked Banks into a corner, then cut him off as Banks tried to circle out. Banks then committed a common and fatal error: He backed into the ropes with his hands low and his head high. Banks attempted a jab, but Miranda timed him perfectly, flicking a jab of his own before dropping the bomb.

While Miranda is hardly known for his stealth in the ring, the explosive right had a slightly sneaky quality to it, owing perhaps to its uncharacteristically precise delivery as compared to Miranda's typically looping blows.

The punch that nearly deposited Banks in Press Row lacked the velocity of, say, Hasim Rahman's perfect shot in the fifth round of his 2001 heavyweight title fight with Lennox Lewis. But the sight of Banks teetering on the ropes gave us one of 2008's most enduring images and earned top honors in the category. ■

# UPSET OF THE YEAR

## BERNARD HOPKINS W 12 KELLY PAVLIK

Had Bernard Hopkins gone the distance with Kelly Pavlik and scratched out a close points win, chances are the 2008 Upset of the Year would still involve "B-Hop" and "The Ghost." After all, 43-year-old Hopkins had gone on record saying he was only fighting for back pay. In his previous bout, he'd allowed Joe Calzaghe to rise from a first-round knockdown to outwork him down the stretch, affirming suspicions that Hopkins was a faded ring general. Most thought Pavlik, the reigning middleweight champion, was surely too young and strong for the old wizard of Philadelphia. But not only did Hopkins win the non-title bout on points, he fought like he was channeling the spirits of his old-school heroes, stunning the Atlantic City audience and taking the decision by scores of 118-108, 117-109, and 119-106.

Hopkins stymied Pavlik at every turn. When the young champion tried to unleash his right hand, Hopkins was gone. When Pavlik tried to rough up the veteran, Hopkins scowled and fired off an angry combination in return. This was clearly not the same Hopkins who has contented himself for years with monotonous defensive displays marked by excessive clutching. Against Pavlik, Hopkins was an offensive machine. As early as round two he was landing hard, clean shots that made Pavlik's knees jiggle. As if trying to make up for the number of dull bouts he's forced fans to endure in the past,

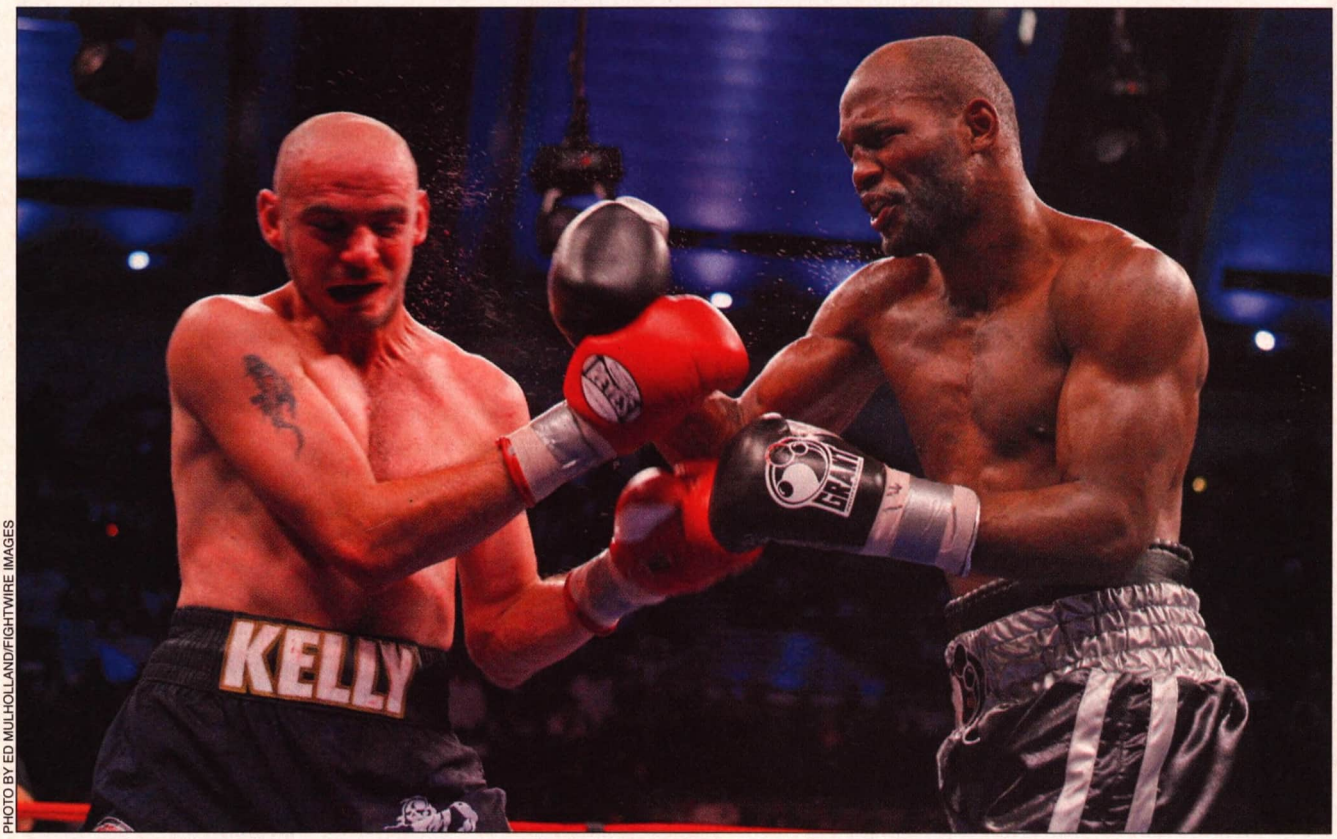



PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Hopkins totally outclassed Pavlik from first bell to last*

# Honorable Mention

2008 was a good year for upsets. In February, welterweight **Paul Williams** took his undefeated record to the Pechanga Resort & Casino in Temecula, California, to face 6-1 underdog **Carlos Quintana**. Williams was fresh off a win over Antonio Margarito, but he was outworked by the game and skillful Quintana, losing on points over 12 rounds.

**Breidis Prescott**'s savage first-round knockout of young British star **Amir Khan** in Manchester in September may not have been an upset to Khan's critics, who always claimed he possessed a shaky defense, but Khan's supporters must've been stunned.

British boxing fans also watched another of their best fighters, **Junior Witter**, lose to the relatively unknown **Timothy Bradley** in May. Witter was on the verge of becoming a real force in the 140-pound division when Bradley beat him via split decision in Nottingham.

Few expected crude slugger **Vic Darchinyan** to have much success against slick southpaw **Cristian Mijares** in November. But in this battle of junior bantamweight alphabet titlists in Carson, California, Darchinyan showed better boxing skills and a heavier punch to stop Mijares in the ninth.

**Sergio Mora** became the first fighter to emerge from *The Contender* TV series to win an alphabet title, in June, when he earned a majority decision over the vastly more experienced **Vernon Forrest**, taking home the WBC junior middleweight belt, in Uncasville, Connecticut.

Another *Contender* alumni, middleweight **Brian Vera**, scored a memorable upset when he defeated the highly touted Irish prospect **Andy Lee** in March, also in Uncasville. Lee was ahead on points, having dropped Vera in the first, but the bloodied Vera stunned Lee with a series of unanswered blows in the seventh until Lee's undefeated record was just a memory.

*Prescott dispatches previously undefeated Khan in quick order*

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

**Deandre Latimore** was an anonymous junior middleweight who had not fought outside of Missouri when he journeyed to New York to face ESPN2 favorite and hometowner **Sechew Powell** in June. Latimore scored a surprise seventh-round TKO.

One of the more pleasing upsets of the year saw veteran **Raul Marquez** dust off his old skills and outpoint middleweight prospect **Giovanni Lorenzo** in Hollywood, Florida, in June. Apparently, the 36-year-old Marquez didn't know he was being served up as a sacrificial lamb; he fought evenly with the decade younger Lorenzo, outworking him for much of the fight. When the youngster blatantly headbutted Marquez in the 10th, a point was deducted from Lorenzo's score. The point turned out to be the difference, as Marquez won by unanimous scores of 114-113.

Hopkins skipped his usual late-round fade and tried to end matters in the 12th, staggering Pavlik with a flurry of short, accurate punches. Pavlik survived to the final bell, and Hopkins walked away with a masterpiece.

It's become de rigueur to compare Hopkins to the great fighting men of the past, but beneath Hopkins' aging façade lurks a millionaire athlete who could only exist in the modern era. He shares a certain wiliness with the old-timers, but he's certainly not fighting under the crude conditions of the past—in that context he's relatively pampered—and he hasn't battered his body through 100 or so fights. After a mere 54 contests, he's pretty fresh. He fights when he feels like it, and when he has to gain or lose some weight, he hires conditioning guru Mackie Shilstone. What's throwback about that?

But if it's a mistake to place Hopkins alongside the legends of yesteryear in some respects, he's certainly a legend of this era. He's outlasted his contemporaries, and he's recreated himself many times, from dirty Philly brawler, to defensive stylist, to the incarnation he unveiled this year in Atlantic City. He's also had to fight under the media glare of modern times—unlike Ray Robinson or Archie Moore, Hopkins doesn't have the luxury of taking a tune-up away from the spotlight. Everything Hopkins does now is promoted as a major event. And so it was, with the boxing world watching, that Hopkins put forth an effort that may ultimately define his career.

As the decision was announced, Hopkins glared at press row. But his angry eyes gave way to quivering lips. Back pay? No, fighters don't become emotional when fighting for back pay. Hopkins was fighting for something far more important, his legacy perhaps, or to prove he still had some pop in the old legs. ■

# COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

# VITALI KLITSCHKO

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Klitschko annexed the WBC heavyweight strap in his first comeback bout*

Those with short memories may have forgotten that Vitali Klitschko was once recognized by THE RING as the world heavyweight champion. Not only had he lived up to THE RING's championship policy, but also he dispatched opponents the way we like to see heavyweights do business. Unlike his overly cautious brother, Wladimir, Vitali walked directly to his opponents and bludgeoned them. When he had somebody hurt, he swung like he was taking fungo practice, Ukraine style. He seemed just what the game needed: a legitimate, heavyweight gunslinger.

But no sooner had Klitschko won our admiration than his career was derailed by injuries. The increasing fragility of his enormous body caused a bout with Hasim Rahman to be postponed four times in 2005. This lead to his retirement from boxing and subsequent run for mayor of Kiev in 2006. Between his physical ills and his political aspirations, there was no reason to bank on the elder Klitschko any longer.

We hesitated to embrace the idea when Vitali announced his return to boxing in 2007. By then we were used to Wladimir, and another Klitschko would just gum up the

# Honorable Mention

By this time last year, we were writing about **Vic Darchinyan** because Nonito Donaire had knocked him face-first into the canvas. After such a shocking knockout loss, we wondered if the cocky Darchinyan might lose his mojo. However, he smashed his way back into the spotlight in November, stopping double alphabet titlist Cristian Mijares in nine. Darchinyan looked every bit like the destroyer we remembered, crouching toward Mijares and hurling haymakers until he achieved his desired result.

Before his fascinating win over Kelly Pavlik in October, **Bernard Hopkins** had lost three of his last five fights and was known to run out of steam during a bout's later stages. Whether his newfound effectiveness had to do with curing a thyroid problem, as has been suggested, remains to be seen. But he certainly looked like a star again in October, dominating the fight from bell to bell.

He was once touted as the "most avoided fighter in boxing," but **Antonio Margarito** lost some luster when he dropped a close 12-round decision to Paul Williams in 2007. "The Tijuana Tornado" promptly made up for it in 2008, blasting out Kermit Cintron in six rounds in April, and demolishing Miguel Cotto in 11 in July. If Margarito seemed dangerous before, he seems doubly so now.

**Raul Marquez** looked like a shot fighter in June 2004 when he retired on his stool against Jermain Taylor. A former Olympian with a blossoming career as a broadcaster, Marquez had other options. But after a layoff, he returned to action in 2006, taking a series of midlevel bouts in Louisiana, Texas, and Florida. He won five in a row, but a March 2008 draw with aging veteran Bronco McKart did nothing to increase our faith in him. Then Marquez stunned Showtime viewers in June by outworking previously undefeated prospect Giovanni Lorenzo, earning a shot at IBF beltholder Arthur Abraham. Marquez' comeback trail led all the way to Bayern, Germany, where it came to a bittersweet end as Abraham stopped Marquez inside seven rounds. There was irony in that Marquez ended up retiring on his stool again. Still, "El Diamante" had come a long way. Not many of Jermain Taylor's old victims end up fighting for a title on pay-per-view four years later.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTFIRE IMAGES

*Marquez' unlikely comeback led to a title shot*

works. The fact that much of 2008 passed without a peep from Vitali verified what we thought—he was just another indecisive fighter who liked to see his name in print. In October, though, the nearly four-year wait was over. The O2 World Arena, in Berlin, Germany, rocked as Klitschko sauntered to the ring, his beady-eyed stare as cold as ever. It was comeback time.

He had a willing accomplice in Sam Peter, the latest in a long line of underachieving heavyweights. Peter happened to be wearing the WBC title belt, a bauble he'd won after a series of elimination bouts that culminated seven months earlier with a kayo of game, old journeyman Oleg Maskaev. There'd been some critics who didn't believe Klitschko deserved a shot at the alphabet belt, but few expected much from 37-year-old, anyway. Fighters didn't return after four years of inactivity to reclaim titles. If his back and knee held up long enough, the thinking went, Klitschko might last five rounds before the bullnecked Peter got to him. But Klitschko boxed from that start as if he'd never been away. Ring rust? Forget it.

Klitschko's jab was like a battering ram, jarring Peter's head. The left hooks behind the jab were compact and accurate. Midway through the first round Klitschko landed a right hand that shook Peter badly. Peter had no answers. All he could do was absorb punches for the next seven rounds until his handlers stopped the bout. Klitschko's performance was measured, but was, in its own way, quite grand.

With Vitali and his brother occupying the top two spots in THE RING's heavyweight ratings, the concept of a singular recognized champion becomes a little more remote. For now, we'll take the brothers' title-grabbing act for what it is—a novelty that could only happen in this era of fragmented titles. Blame boxing; don't blame the Klitschkos. As for whipping Sam Peter after a four-year absence, it was the year's most impressive comeback. For all of Peter's limitations, no one has ever punished him the way Vitali did. ■

# EVENT OF THE YEAR

## THE RETIREMENT OF FLOYD MAYWEATHER

PHOTO BY JESSE GRANT/WIRE IMAGES

*Mayweather hypes match with WWE star Big Show*

He'd crossed over into mainstream superstardom in a sport hurting for household names. Yet when Floyd Mayweather made the surprise announcement on June 6 that he was walking away from boxing and a scheduled megabucks rematch with Oscar De La Hoya, the stir was markedly flat.

Really, few expected the unbeaten, 31-year-old Mayweather to stick to his word. "Pretty Boy" had tried to pull this before, having broken into tears as he announced his retirement after beating Carlos Baldomir in 2006. Plus, there was just too much money to be made by "Money," and too many past examples of retired champs who couldn't stay away.

But, naysayers be damned, Mayweather kept his promise throughout 2008, and his decision to remain on the sidelines altered the boxing landscape.

Mayweather's move to forgo the second bout with De La Hoya paved the way for Manny Pacquiao's breakthrough stoppage of "The Golden Boy," setting up potential blockbusters in 2009 for the Filipino star. With no Golden Calf to chase in Mayweather, other stars in the welterweight vicinity instead chased each other. That included Mayweather's would-be 147-pound successors, Antonio Margarito and Miguel Cotto, who slugged it out in July in one of the year's best fights.

Meanwhile, as he stayed away from the ring, Mayweather stayed in the spotlight. In February, he pocketed a huge

# Honorable Mention

Boxing might have lost the lucrative Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya rematch, but it did get **"The Dream Match"** between De La Hoya and Pacquiao. The December fight did 1.25 million buys, making it the top sports pay-per-view of 2008, and grossed $70-million in PPV revenue. It was the fourth non-heavyweight bout to eclipse one million buys, and Pacquiao's win set up several potential super-bouts for the Filipino star. Like Mayweather-De La Hoya in 2007, the show was helped by a multi-city media tour and HBO's *24/7* reality series. It also got a unique boost from Full Throttle sports drink, Cazadores tequila, and Tecate beer, all of which offered rebates from $10 to $20 in an attempt to offset the effects of a struggling economy.

Despite years of denials from **Shane Mosley**, it was discovered in December that the former welterweight champ told a grand jury in 2003 that he had knowingly injected himself with performance-enhancing drugs from BALCO as he prepared for his rematch with De La Hoya. The transcript of Mosley's testimony was part of a BALCO file under a protective order until a federal judge allowed prosecutors to share it, along with thousands of other files, with the legal team of baseball slugger Barry Bonds.

Thanks to the slowing U.S. economy, boxing will have fewer television outlets to build fighters in 2009. Telefutura announced in November that it was canceling its long-running ***Solo Boxeo*** series, one month after ESPN2 opted to ax ***Wednesday Night Fights***. *Solo Boxeo*, which began in 2000, held its final show December 20 in Denver.

In January, former New Jersey boxing commissioner **Larry Hazzard Sr.** filed suit against state attorney general **Anne Milgram**. Hazzard, who was fired in November 2007 after 21 years on the job, claimed in the suit that he was let go for exposing violations made by deputy commissioner **Sylvester Cuyler**.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

***Oscar and Manny a few days before the richest fight of the year***

In a year of political change in the U.S., there were also three major changes atop state boxing commissions. New Jersey filled Hazzard's vacancy in October with Kansas' former commissioner **Aaron Davis**. In New York, new Gov. David Paterson removed **Ron Scott Stevens** in July, after five years as head of the NYSAC, and replaced him, sans lawsuit, with former judge **Melvina Lathan**. And in California, the rocky three-year run of **Armando Garcia** came to an abrupt end in November when Garcia resigned amid pressure over a suit filed by a mixed martial arts group.

Apparently, there is still only one **Ricky Hatton**. A loss to Mayweather in 2007 wasn't enough to turn the Brits off to their beloved junior welterweight champ, who set a U.K. attendance record in May for his 12-round comeback win against Juan Lazcano. The fight drew approximately 57,000 fans to City of Manchester Stadium.

paycheck for a "knockout" of The Big Show at WrestleMania XXIV. It proved to be WWE's lone entry among 2008's top-10 best-selling pay-per-views (Pacquiao-De La Hoya and Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad also made the list).

In August, Mayweather lost $7-million worth of jewelry in a robbery of his Las Vegas home, and later offered a $100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the burglars. While watching Chad Dawson's win against Antonio Tarver in October, Mayweather told Showtime that Dawson was the new pound-for-pound king. In December, rapper 50 Cent told ESPN.com that he got into a fight with Mayweather over money before WrestleMania. And rumors continued throughout the year of a Mayweather jump into mixed martial arts.

But as 2008 ended, it appeared as if Mayweather would be jumping back into boxing. Shortly after his successor as pound-for-pound king Pacquiao beat De La Hoya, rumors of a Mayweather-Pacquiao match in 2009 began to make their way around the Internet. There were also reports out of the British media that Mayweather's camp had contacted junior welterweight champ Ricky Hatton about a possible rematch. With Hatton being trained by Floyd Mayweather Sr., we could get the Mayweather-versus-Mayweather soap opera that was shaping up to be the juiciest storyline of a De La Hoya rematch.

Of course, a Mayweather return would also raise the possibility of intriguing matchups with Margarito, Cotto and Paul Williams, fighters who many felt Mayweather was ducking by bowing out early. There will be no shortage of opportunities for Mayweather to fatten his bank account, and his legacy.

So maybe doubts about Mayweather's supposed retirement were well founded. But for all those fears that boxing couldn't afford the premature loss of one of its top stars, Mayweather's absence from the sport in 2008 might have actually helped boxing by setting the table for a fantastic 2009. ■

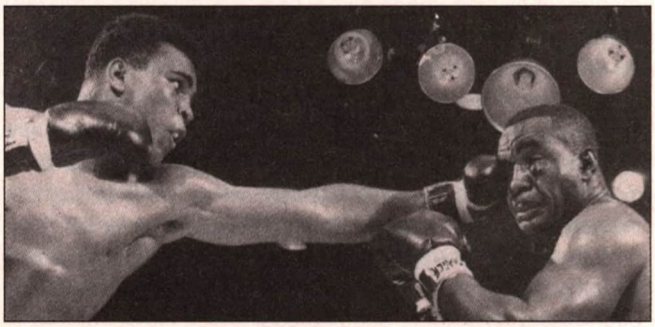
# PAST WINNERS

## FIGHTER Of The Year

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/ Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins
2002: Vernon Forrest
2003: James Toney
2004: Glen Johnson
2005: Ricky Hatton
2006: Manny Pacquiao
2007: Floyd Mayweather

## FIGHT Of The Year

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti



*Cassius Clay's seventh-round kayo of Sonny Liston was 1964's Fight of the Year*

1999: Paulie Ayala W 12
Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12
Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10
Emanuel Burton
2002: Micky Ward W 10
Arturo Gatti
2003: Arturo Gatti W 10
Micky Ward
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Erik Morales
2005: Diego Corrales KO 10
Jose Luis Castillo
2006: Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 10
Mahyar Monshipour
2007: Israel Vazquez KO 6
Rafael Marquez

## ROUND Of The Year

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001: Hopkins-Trinidad, 10
2002: Ward-Gatti I, 9
2003: Freitas-Barrios, 11
2004: Barrera-Morales III, 11
2005: Corrales-Castillo I, 10
2006: Sithchatchawal-Monshipour, 10
2007: Vazquez-Marquez II, 3

## KNOCKOUT Of The Year

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1
Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1
John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11
Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11
Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5
Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10
Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11
Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11
Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5
Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4 Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6
Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10
Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4
Hasim Rahman
2002: Lennox Lewis KO 8 Mike Tyson
2003: Rocky Juarez KO 10
Antonio Diaz
2004: Antonio Tarver KO 2 Roy Jones
2005: Allan Green KO 1
Jaidon Codrington
2006: Calvin Brock KO 6
Zuri Lawrence
2007: Nonito Donaire KO 5
Vic Darchinyan

## UPSET Of The Year

1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6
Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10
Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10
Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10
Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11
Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15
Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6
Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12
Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3
Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12
Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10
Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8
Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4
Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12
Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7
Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11
Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10
Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10
Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10
Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12
Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5
Lennox Lewis
2002: Juan Carlos Rubio W 10
Francisco Bojado
2003: Corrie Sanders KO 2
Wladimir Klitschko
2004: Glen Johnson KO 9
Roy Jones
2005: Zahir Raheem W 12
Erik Morales
2006: Carlos Baldomir W 12
Zab Judah
2007: Nonito Donaire KO 5
Vic Darchinyan

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

***Roy Jones' overwhelms Virgil Hill en route to 1998's Knockout of the Year***

## COMEBACK Of The Year

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson
2002: Arturo Gatti
2003: James Toney
2004: Marco Antonio Barrera
2005: Ike Quartey
2006: Oleg Maskaev
2007: Paul Malignaggi

## EVENT Of The Year

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series
2002: The Lewis-Tyson press conference brawl
2003: Roy Jones fights at heavyweight
2004: Lennox Lewis retirement
2005: *The Contender*
2006: Corrales-Castillo III Weigh-in
2007: Mayweather-De La Hoya

# THE 30TH ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

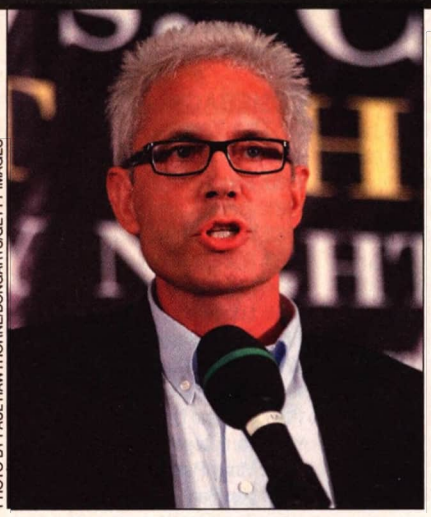


PHOTO BY PAUL HAWTHORNE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Boente manages both Klitschko bothers*

**Trainer of the Year**
Javier Capetillo
(Antonio Margarito, Jesus Soto Karass)

**Manager of the Year**
Bernd Boente
(Wladimir Klitschko, Vitali Klitschko)

**Female Fighter of the Year**
Holly Holm

**Female Fight of the Year**
Chevelle Hallback W 10
Jeannine Garside

**Most Exciting Division**
Lightweight

**Most Boring Division**
Heavyweight

**Division With Most Potential**
Welterweight

**Division With Least Potential**
Heavyweight

**Future Champion Trophy**
Victor Ortiz

**Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award**
Francisco Lorenzo W Disq. 4
Humberto Soto
Ishmail Arvin KO 6 Anthony Thompson

**Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial**
James De La Rosa

**Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid**
Francisco Lorenzo W Disq. 4
Humberto Soto
Andre Dirrell KO 4 Mike Paschall
Manny Pacquiao W 12
Juan Manuel Marquez
Joe Calzaghe W 12 Roy Jones

**Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award**
Roman Gonzalez

**Duane Bobick Disappointment Award**
Amir Khan, Andy Lee,
O'Neil Bell, Sam Peter

**Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award**
Rafael Marquez (vs. Israel Vazquez)
Israel Vazquez (vs. Rafael Marquez)
David Diaz (vs. Manny Pacquiao)
Rogers Mtagwa (vs. Tomas Villa)
Brian Vera (vs. James Kirkland)
Andrey Tsurkan (vs. Alfredo Angulo)
Steve Cunningham (vs. Tomasz Adamek)

**Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation**
Joe Calzaghe

**Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year**
Paul Williams KO 8 Verno Phillips

**The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award**
Anthony Bonsante pointlessly pretending to be knocked out by Adonis Stevenson, then complaining about the ref's decision to stop the fight

**Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award**
Ivan Calderon

**Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check**
Oscar De La Hoya, Roy Jones, Jose Luis Castillo, Antwun Echols, Mauricio Pastrana, Chris Byrd, Stevie Johnston, Kevin Kelley, Carl Daniels

**Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy**
Joan Guzman

**Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award**
Lucian Bute (vs. Librado Andrade)

**Should've-Stayed-Out-To-Pasture Wall Calendar**
Felix Trinidad, Freddie Norwood, Riddick Bowe

**Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator**
Chris Arreola

PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Jones' face shredded by Calzaghe*

**Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy**
Gary Shaw, for convincing CBS to air two live Kimbo Slice fights and no live boxing matches

**Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award**
Kelly Pavlik

**Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy**
Oscar De La Hoya

**Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award**
Zsolt Erdei, Allan Green, Jean-Marc Mormeck

**Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy**
Clinton Woods (vs. Antonio Tarver)
Peter Manfredo (vs. Sakio Bika)
Gary Lockett (vs. Kelly Pavlik)

**Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair**
Bernard Hopkins

**Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron-Chin Anvil**
Antonio Margarito (vs. Miguel Cotto)
Tomasz Adamek (vs. Steve Cunningham)
Steve Forbes (vs. Oscar De La Hoya & Andre Berto)

**Most Improved Fighter Award**
Andre Dirrell

**Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award**
Juan Manuel Marquez

**Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year**
Funky Yoshida

**Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug**
Every Juan Manuel Lopez fight
Kendall Holt KO 1 Ricardo Torres
Paul Williams KO 1 Carlos Quintana
Paul Williams KO 1 Andy Kolle
Monte Barrett KO 1 Tye Fields
Zahir Raheem KO 1 Ricardo Dominguez
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 1 Johnnie Edwards
Ji-Hoon Kim KO 1 Koba Gogoladze
James Kirkland KO 1 Eromosele Albert

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Barrett plows Fields in first*

Raul Martinez KO 1 Victor Proa
David Haye KO 2 Enzo Maccarinelli

**Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy**
Breidis Prescott (KO 1 Amir Khan)
Cesar Canchila (W 12 Giovanni Segura)
Deandre Lattimore (KO 7 Sechew Powell)
Jose Herrera (KO 5 Aaron Williams)

**TV Mismatches Of The Year**
Kelly Pavlik KO 3 Gary Lockett (HBO)
Shawn Estrada KO 1 Shaun Spaid (Versus)
Roman Martinez W 10 Cristian Favela (Telefutura)
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 1 Leivi Brea (Telefutura)
Mike Alvarado KO 4 Cesar Bazan (HBO PPV)
Andre Berto KO 7 Miki Rodriguez (HBO)
Jesus Soto Karass KO 2 Hicklet Lau (Telefutura)
Miguel Cotto KO 5 Alfonso Gomez (HBO)

**Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart**
Israel Vazquez, Rafael Marquez, Tomasz Adamek, Jhonny Gonzalez, Jorge Arce, Tomas Villa

**Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes**
Monty Meza Clay

**Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year**
Wladimir Klitschko & Sultan Ibragimov (vs. each other)
Sam Peter (KO by 8 Vitali Klitschko)

Sergio Medina (KO by 1 Juan Manuel Lopez)
Julio Garcia (L 10 Danny Perez)

**Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick**
Paulie Malignaggi nearly costing himself his title by attempting to fight with Milli Vanilli-esque hair extensions

**Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award**
Kendall Holt, Andreas Kotelnik, Vitali Klitschko

**Globetrotters vs. Generals "Artificially Inflated Record" Award**
Tyrone Brunson

**Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award**
Israel Vazquez (W 12 Rafael Marquez)
Antonio Margarito (KO 11 Miguel Cotto)
Rogers Mtagwa (KO 10 Tomas Villa)
Rocky Juarez (KO 10 Jorge Barrios)
Alex Bunema (KO 10 Roman Karmazin)

**Facial Monstrosity Of The Year Golden Enswell**
Jorge Barrios (vs. Rocky Juarez)

**Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award**
Winky Wright, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Paul Briggs

**Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy**
Lamont Peterson, Steven Luevano, David Lopez, Herman Ngoudjo, Jose Navarro

**Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award**
B. J. Flores

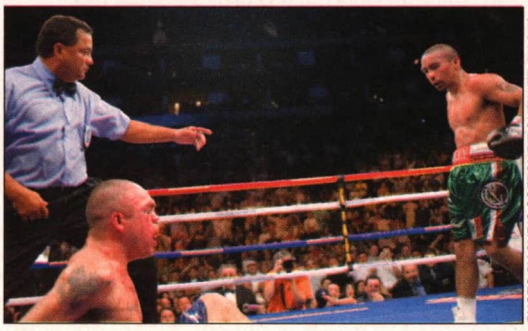


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Juarez rallies to kayo Barrios*

# "BEST FIGHTER" POLL

## A Survey Of The Experts

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/GETTY IMAGES

*Manny Pacquiao punishes David Diaz with a left uppercut*

Was there really any question? You could have polled five guys in a Calcutta men's room, and if they knew even an inkling of boxing, they knew that Manny Pacquiao was the best pound-for-pound fighter in 2008.

That's what made this year's poll a mere formality. "Pac-Man's" victories over Juan Manuel Marquez, David Diaz, and Oscar De La Hoya placed him on a special pantheon with fighters like Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins, and Floyd Mayweather.

In fact, Pacquiao became a full-time member of that select group with his dominating '08, joining them as only the fifth fighter in the 28-year history of "The Best Fighter Poll" to be selected unanimously by the 10-member panel as the number-one pound-for-pound fighter.

Pacquiao made more history outside the ring. The poll has been in existence since 1980—yet there has never been back-to-back unanimous choices. That is, until '08, when Pacquiao followed Mayweather to become the first consecutive unanimous selection. It made it a clean handoff from the retired Mayweather to Pac-Man as to who would carry the mantle as the best fighter in the world.

The real debate for '08 came with who would finish behind Pacquiao. Joe Calzaghe had an amazing year, beating Bernard Hopkins in a close, split-decision in April, then thoroughly demolishing the faded Jones in November.

But Juan Manuel Marquez' '08 could not be overlooked. Marquez lost a razor-thin, one-point decision to Pacquiao in March, then came back to win THE RING's lightweight world championship by stopping Joel Casamayor.

Calzaghe was the winner of the Pacquiao runner-up race. But the 49-point difference between Pacquiao and Calzaghe is the largest difference in the poll since 1999, when Jones was a unanimous choice and separated by the all-time high 65 points from Oscar De La Hoya. Pacquiao's winning difference is also the third largest, behind Jones in '99 and Hagler's 54-point edge over Aaron Pryor in 1983.

This year's panel: Showtime's *ShoBox* ringside analyst Steve Farhood, ESPN.com boxing writer Dan Rafael, HBO's *Championship Boxing* blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley, WBC junior welterweight titlist Timothy Bradley, rising super middleweight prospect Daniel Jacobs, Showtime *Championship Boxing* ringside analyst Al Bernstein, Fox Sports ringside analyst Rich Marotta, ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* studio host Brian Kenny, and Telefutura's *Solo Boxeo* blow-by-blow announcer Bernie Osuna.

To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

*Joe Calzaghe goes to the body against Bernard Hopkins*

## Al Bernstein

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Juan Manuel Marquez
3. Israel Vazquez
4. Rafael Marquez
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Paul Williams
7. Antonio Margarito
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Joe Calzaghe
10. Chad Dawson

"The top of my list was dominated by smaller boxers who are only small in size, not skill, or the ability to create excitement. A tough dilemma was whether to list Paul Williams over Antonio Margarito. Margarito had the most exciting and biggest 'splash' victory this year over Cotto, but in the end, Williams owns a win over Margarito, so I had to rate him just above him—although the fight they had was extremely close. Two fighters who are just below this top-10 are Arthur Abraham and Joshua Clottey."

## Steve Farhood

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Israel Vazquez
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Antonio Margarito
7. Rafael Marquez
8. Ivan Calderon
9. Paul Williams
10. Miguel Cotto

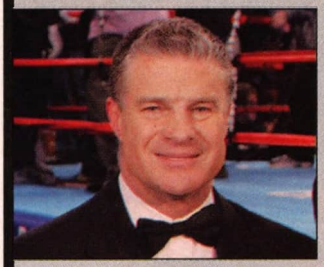
"Where is all the new blood? Paul Williams and Miguel Cotto are the only two fighters on this list who are under the age of 30. And not that anyone has noticed, but it's been five years since a heavyweight has made this top-10 poll. Pacquiao is a no-brainer, and when you consider the range of weight classes that he has dominated, it's time to consider him among the all-time greats. If you told me 10 years ago that 'B-Hop' would be on this list, I would accuse you of taking too many punches, but here he is, at number five no less."

## Dan Rafael

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Antonio Margarito
6. Israel Vazquez
7. Miguel Cotto
8. Ivan Calderon
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Shane Mosley

"Ranking Pacquiao number-one is as easy a call as there is. He proved he's number one by doing what the mythology of pound-for-pound is all about—he fought three times in three weight classes, including a big jump up in weight to welterweight. He won all three fights, one for a lineal world title, one for an alphabet title, and then knocked off the era's biggest superstar in Oscar De La Hoya. Although Pacquiao put distance between himself and Calzaghe, Calzaghe deserves his number-two spot because he remained unbeaten, won the light heavyweight championship, and beat two huge names in 2008 in Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones."

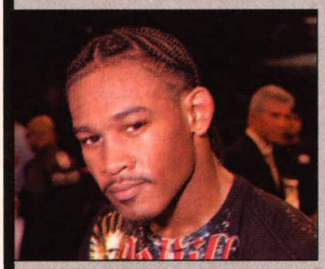
## Jim Lampley



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Juan Manuel Marquez
4. Antonio Margarito
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Israel Vazquez
7. Ivan Calderon
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Rafael Marquez
10. Kelly Pavlik

"It's a sport in which the margins of competition are relatively fine, and the list reflects that. Pacquiao had a one-point decision win over Juan Manuel Marquez. Calzaghe got a split decision over Hopkins. Hopkins easily whipped Pavlik, but Pavlik remained the clear middleweight champion. Margarito beat down Cotto, but the fight amply demonstrated why the loser would still rank in the world top 10. Vazquez' trilogy with Rafael Marquez guarantees they both go to the Hall of Fame, and putting Kelly Pavlik ahead of Shane Mosley, Paul Williams, Ricky Hatton, and Chad Dawson is ... excruciating. Put on a blindfold and take a stab."

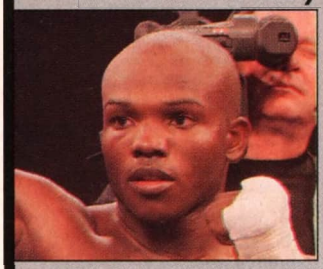
## Daniel Jacobs



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Ricky Hatton
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Juan Manuel Marquez
6. Shane Mosley
7. Antonio Margarito
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Paul Williams
10. Vic Darchiyan

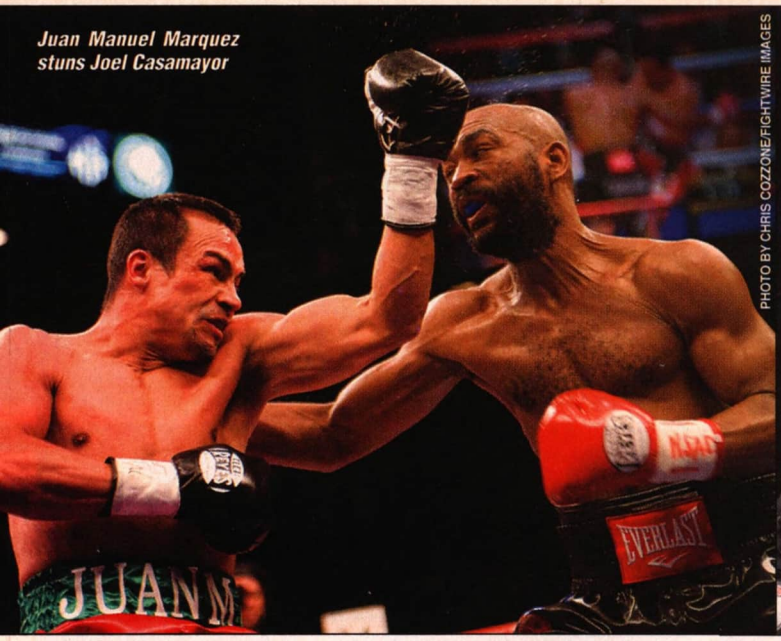
"There's no question about Pacquiao. Once Floyd Mayweather retired, he destroyed all competition before him. Calzaghe is undefeated and he beat Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins, Mikkel Kessler, he's beaten a lot of guys in the top 10. I think Hatton is a beast, a vicious bodypuncher, and he still only has one loss against the best fighter in the world, at that time, Floyd Mayweather. You can't ignore Bernard. I put Bernard high because of what he did to Kelly Pavlik. I don't think anyone thought he would do what he did against Pavlik. He looked amazing."

## Timothy Bradley



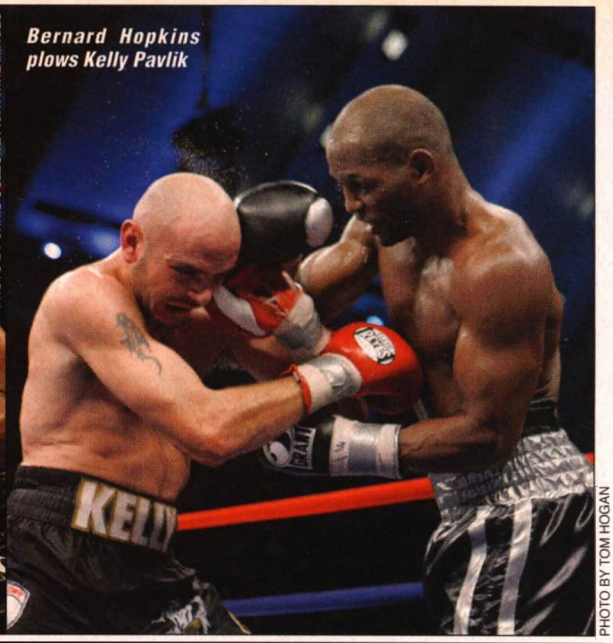
1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Antonio Margarito
6. Miguel Cotto
7. Israel Vazquez
8. Rafael Marquez
9. Ricky Hatton
10. Paul Williams

"Pacquiao is the total package who has beaten the very best in five weight classes. I put Calzaghe at two because he beat Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones, and he's never lost. Hopkins is a clever, old-school guy who can still beat anyone at 44 years old. Margarito beat Cotto, and Vazquez has the heart of a lion and is one of the very best. I put Hatton in at nine because his only loss was to the very best, Floyd Mayweather. Paul Williams showed his greatness by beating Margarito."



*Juan Manuel Marquez stuns Joel Casamayor*

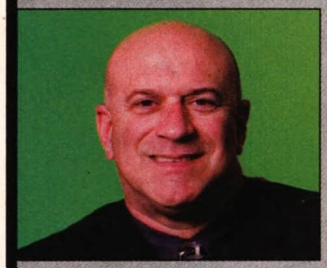
PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



*Bernard Hopkins plows Kelly Pavlik*

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

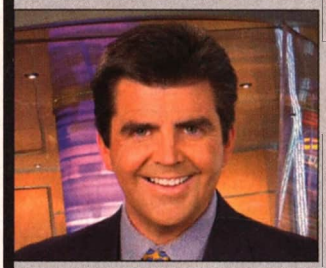
## Rich Marotta



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Juan Manuel Marquez
3. Joe Calzaghe
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Israel Vazquez
6. Antonio Margarito
7. Rafael Marquez
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Ricky Hatton
10. Juan Manuel Lopez

"The choice of Pacquiao leaves little explanation. He's Fighter of the Year and still improving and entering all-time great consideration. Marquez is number two based on fighting Pacquiao dead even twice, if you take away one point. Calzaghe is a Hall of Famer with brilliant skills. Hopkins is fourth not only for his body of work, but what he still is in the ring. Vazquez is fifth, having overachieved and never out of a fight. Hatton has only one loss, and he showed against Paul Malignaggi that he has a few new tricks he can use. Lopez is boxing's next superstar."

## Brian Kenny



1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Juan Manuel Marquez
3. Joe Calzaghe
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Antonio Margarito
6. Paul Williams
7. Ricky Hatton
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Israel Vazquez
10. Kelly Pavlik

"Look, it's all splitting hairs here. I had Marquez beating Pacquiao, but I try to respect the official decision if it's not incompetent or seemingly corrupted. If you put Calzaghe number one, and you definitely can find reason, then B-Hop has to be number two. I had Bernard in a draw with Joe, but I respect the decision, although a demolition of Kelly Pavlik means a lot more than a beatdown of an old Roy Jones Jr. I also chose not to banish Hatton, Cotto, and Pavlik from the list because of losses to top fighters."

## Bernie Osuna

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Joe Calzaghe
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Juan Manuel Marquez
5. Israel Vazquez
6. Rafael Marquez
7. Antonio Margarito
8. Paul Williams
9. Juan Manuel Lopez
10. Arthur Abraham

"Manny Pacquiao has to be the unanimous number-one pound-for-pound fighter in the world today, so enough said about Pac-Man, since he said it all with his fists in a stellar 2008. Joe Calzaghe finally 'invaded America,' beating two of the greatest fighters of this generation, the 'eternal' Bernard Hopkins and one time pound-for-pound king Roy Jones Jr., albeit at the tail end of his career. 'The Executioner' continues to amaze. B-Hop is a testament to clean living and dedication in the gym. I put Juan Manuel Lopez in there at nine, because 'Juanma' has stopped his last 12 opponents."

## The Ring

1. Manny Pacquiao
2. Juan Manuel Marquez
3. Joe Calzaghe
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Israel Vazquez
6. Antonio Margarito
7. Rafael Marquez
8. Miguel Cotto
9. Ivan Calderon
10. Ricky Hatton

"This was one of the easiest choices to make in years. With victories over Marquez, Diaz, and De La Hoya, selecting Pacquiao number one is a no-brainer. The real question came at number two. Marquez and Calzaghe both had tremendous years. Calzaghe beat Bernard Hopkins, although an argument could be made for B-Hop. There was no questioning Calzaghe's dominance over Jones. But here's the difference: Marquez beat Joel Casamayor, in fact stopping him for the first time in his career, and it was a Casamayor much closer to his prime than the version of Jones that Calzaghe vanquished."

### THE RESULTS

1. Manny Pacquiao—150
2. Joe Calzaghe—101
3. Juan Manuel Marquez—99
4. Bernard Hopkins—73
5. Antonio Margarito—52
6. Israel Vazquez—50
7. Rafael Marquez—31
8. Miguel Cotto—28
9. Ricky Hatton—18 (tie)
9. Paul Williams—18 (tie)

### ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Ivan Calderon—12
Juan Manuel Lopez—3
Kelly Pavlik—2
Shane Mosley—1
Arthur Abraham—1
Vic Darchiyan—1
Chad Dawson—1

### 2007 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather—150
2. Manny Pacquiao—103
3. Joe Calzaghe—83
4. Bernard Hopkins—63
5. Juan Manuel Marquez—58
6. Miguel Cotto—51
7. Israel Vazquez—30
8. Kelly Pavlik—21
9. Winky Wright—15
10. Juan Diaz—13 (tie)
10. Oscar De La Hoya—13 (tie)

### 2006 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather—141
2. Manny Pacquiao—129
3. Winky Wright—84
4. Jermain Taylor—61
5. Joe Calzaghe—49
6. Rafael Marquez—28
7. Ricky Hatton—23
8. Shane Mosley—20
9. Jose Luis Castillo—19
10. Bernard Hopkins—16

### 2005 POLL

1. Floyd Mayweather—144
2. Winky Wright—113
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—70
4. Juan Manuel Marquez—43
5. Rafael Marquez—39
6. Ricky Hatton—38
7. Jose Luis Castillo—36
8. Jermain Taylor—34
9. Zab Judah—31
10. Antonio Tarver—30

### 2004 POLL

1. Bernard Hopkins—150
2. Floyd Mayweather—111
3. Kostya Tszyu—88
4. Winky Wright—70
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—52
6. Manny Pacquiao—38
7. Erik Morales—26
8. Juan Manuel Marquez—25
9. Felix Trinidad—22
10. Diego Corrales—11 (tie)
10. Rafael Marquez—11 (tie)

### 2003 POLL

1. Roy Jones—142
2. Bernard Hopkins—114
3. Floyd Mayweather—97
4. Shane Mosley—53
5. Kostya Tszyu—48
6. Oscar De La Hoya—45
7. Manny Pacquiao—38
8. James Toney—35
9. Erik Morales—31
10. Lennox Lewis—22

### 2002 POLL

1. Roy Jones—135
2. Oscar De La Hoya—89
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—78 (tie)
3. Vernon Forrest—78 (tie)
3. Bernard Hopkins—78 (tie)
6. Floyd Mayweather—45
7. Lennox Lewis—43
8. Kostya Tszyu—42
9. Erik Morales—25
10. Shane Mosley—13

### 2001 POLL

1. Shane Mosley—132
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

### 2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

### 1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

### 1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

### 1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

### 1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

### 1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

### 1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

### 1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

### 1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

### 1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

### 1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

### 1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

### 1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

### NO POLL IN 1987

### 1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

### 1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

### 1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

### 1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

### 1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

### 1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

### 1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

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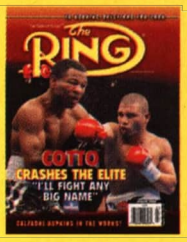


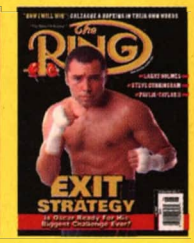


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# 2008: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## A MONTH-BY-MONTH RECAP

Compiled by William Dettloff

Despite the commercial success that was the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya fight in December, as the year closed there was no shortage of forecasts yet again of our sport's imminent demise. Certainly you know the details of those forecasts already; no one enjoys administering last rites over boxing as much as do the writers who are required occasionally to cover it, odd as that is, so there's no use in us going over the gory details again here.

But the next time you read a scribe—or one of the game's most formidable and successful champions, for that matter—going on about this "dying sport," recall all that happened in 2008, which some already have referred to as a "down" year.

Yes, Pacquiao and De La Hoya did better than a million pay-per-view buys and sent some suits home richer and happier than ever. That's not what we're talking about. 2008 did as good a job as any year at providing its fans a rich, melodramatic soap opera so full of transcendent storylines, pathos, heroics, and human failures that no work of fiction could hope to duplicate it in depth or reflection. It was the kind of year you could only find in boxing. Not baseball, not basketball, not MMA or American football or soccer. In what other sport could a Pacquiao rise from the very depths of squalor to become a beacon of hope for an entire nation, gain wealth beyond his dreams, and retain the shy charm, humility, and generosity of an impoverished goat herder?

In what game of chance could there be a Bernard Hopkins, old enough almost to be Kelly Pavlik's father, older than many of the writers covering him, and still summon the ghosts of his youth for a single night of nirvana in Atlantic City?

In what field of business would you find something similar to Antonio Margarito walking through bomb after bomb from Miguel Cotto knowing all the while that the more he took the better his chance would be at getting even before the clock ran out?

Where else would you find Israel Vazquez or Rafael Marquez, or Juan Manuel Marquez and Joel Casamayor? How could the human mind, such as it is, conceive or conjure on its own someone as preposterous as Bob Arum, as hopeful as Donnie McCrary, or as kooky as the Fighting Mayweathers?

How to describe to someone who's never seen them the bloodshot, blue-collar charm of Ricky Hatton, the death-defying resolve of Rogers Mtagwa or Andrey Tsurkan, or the stifled rage of the Brothers Peterson?

This is some game, and whether or not it's as good as it has ever been at making white, middle-aged men rich, there remains no better mirror to our immensely textured, detestable, and endlessly fascinating human experience. Long live this troubled, beautiful sport.

# January

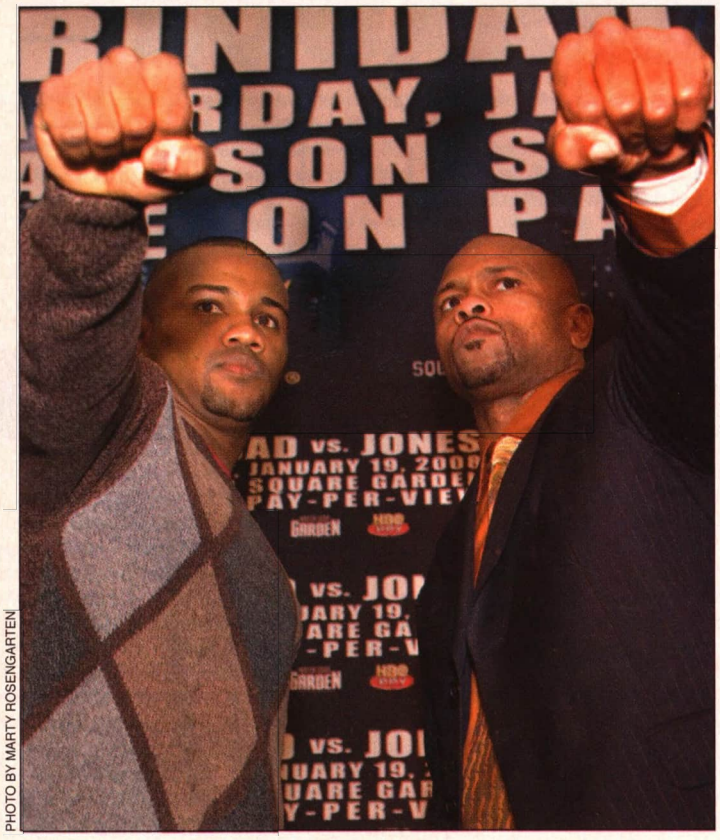



PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

STORY OF THE MONTH

## SMOKE AND MIRRORS

It did not take an expert in the fragility of the human psyche to understand why Roy Jones was so exuberant after beating on the fleshy remains of the once-great Felix Trinidad for 12 rounds in Madison Square Garden. Prizefighters are as susceptible to rationalization and self-deception as the rest of us are, perhaps more so. Theirs is a trade that requires a healthy suspension of disbelief, the same way politics requires a toothy smile or a black heart.

To Jones, Trinidad wasn't a creaking old vessel trying to get work done 23 pounds and about six years past his best days. He wasn't a part-time performer, a soft, wealthy has-been every couple years showing up to cash in on the frenzied loyalties and sympathies of all those hopeful hearts in Puerto Rico and New York.

As Jones saw it—as Jones had to see it—Trinidad was still "Tito," he of the crackling left hook and boyish menace that once upon a time terrified fighters of all stripes between 147 and 154 pounds and even a few 160-pounders.

Because if he didn't see him that way, how could it matter if he won? If Trinidad were anything but Tito, a win would mean nothing, and Jones needed very badly for it to mean something. So to he and his remaining diehards, Jones' unanimous decision win did mean something, but for everyone else, it meant mostly and merely that Jones would get another big fight, and very likely a beating, most plausibly from Joe Calzaghe.

But this was a night for escape, a chance to watch Jones imitate his younger self, the way we all imitate our younger selves, with a guy against whom he could feel safe doing it. So they played their parts. Trinidad was reasonably earnest, but fell twice at the slightest hint of damage and punched only when Jones gave him permission.

Jones preened and posed just like in the good old days and made much of his physical advantages. He was like the captain of the football team at a 20th high school reunion: You knew that in the real world he just wasn't that big a deal anymore and pretty soon the night would end and he'd find it out. This was temporary. But for now it seemed best to let him have his fun. Reality would intrude again soon enough.

*Ralph Dupas*

## IN OTHER NEWS

Former junior welterweight world champion and International Boxing Hall of Fame member **Duilio Loi** died of natural causes in Treviso, Italy, at the age of 78 ... In an IBF junior bantamweight eliminator in Cebu, Philippines, **Vic Darchinyan** and **Z Gorres** battled to an unpopular draw ... In Uncasville, Connecticut, **Paulie Malignaggi** defended the IBF junior welterweight title with a 12-round win over **Herman Ngoudjo** ... Former WBC junior flyweight titleholder **Yoi-Sam Choi** died of brain injuries a week after winning a decision over **Henri Amol** in Seoul, South Korea ... **Chris John** stopped **Roinet Caballero** in seven rounds in Senayan, Indonesia, to retain the WBA featherweight title ... In an important meeting between heavyweight prospects in Berlin, Germany, **Alexander Povetkin** outworked American **Eddie Chambers** to win a 12-round decision ... 1960s junior middleweight titleholder

**Ralph Dupas** died in a nursing home in his native New Orleans, Louisiana. He was 72 ... In Osaka, Japan, WBA bantamweight beltholder **Wladimir Sidorenko** outlasted challenger **Nobuto Ikehara** to win a unanimous decision ... Former New Jersey boxing commissioner **Larry Hazzard** filed suit in US District Court in Camden, claiming he was wrongfully discharged from the post he'd held for 22 years ... Former WBA heavyweight titleholder **Nikolay Valuev** was fined 30,000 rubles and ordered to pay an additional 100,000 rubles for punching a 61-year-old man in St. Petersburg, Russia, in January 2006 ... In Biloxi, Mississippi, heavily hyped prospects **Lamont** and **Anthony Peterson** beat **Antonio Mesquita** and **Jose Antonio Izquierdo** by 10-round decision and eight-round kayo, respectively ... Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder **Mehdi Sahnoune** was sentenced to three years in prison for his role in a gang attack on a fisherman outside a nightclub in France ... In what would prove to be one of the best knockouts of the year, bomb-throwing super middleweight **Edison Miranda** crumpled former *Contender* series contestant **David Banks** with a single, third-round bomb ... Former Florida Athletic Commission chairman and longtime member of the Miami Boxing Commission **Alvin Goodman** committed suicide. He was 79 years old.

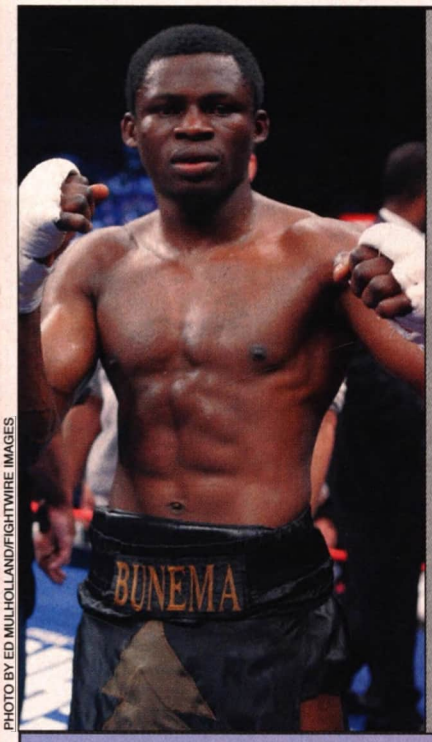



PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## ALEX BUNEMA

The well-traveled Bunema hadn't exactly been on a tear going into his fight against highly rated Roman Karmazin on the Jones-Trinidad undercard. In his last three fights, he'd lost to 14-5 (4) Robert Kamya, then beat Farid Shahid and Steve Walker who were 3-7 (2) and 21-16 (15), respectively. Karmazin, meanwhile, after dropping a close to decision to Cory Spinks, had beaten 25-2 (24) Alejandro Garcia and 21-2-1 (19) James Obede Toney. So what happens? Bunema knocks Karmazin stiff in the 10th round. What did you expect?

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I had a street named after me: "Larry Holmes f___ing Drive ... George Foreman, all those mother___ers got more money than I got? They don't got s___. They got a farm out there with some cows. I don't want to be a farmer."

*—Former world heavyweight champion Larry Holmes in* THE RING *Interview, talking about his finances*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Former heavyweight contender Randall "Tex" Cobb, who, at 54 years old, graduated magna cum laude from Temple University with a bachelor of science degree in sports and recreation management.

**Loser:** One-time red-hot heavyweight prospect Dominick Guinn, who hit a career-low when he was all but shut out over 10 rounds by 22-10 journeyman Robert Hawkins in British Columbia.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## ANDREW GOLOTA W 12 MIKE MOLLO

We're so used to Golota quitting, fouling, or sprinting from the ring when he gets into trouble that it came as something of a shock when he gritted his teeth and punched back after Mollo rattled him early with right hands on the Jones-Trinidad undercard. The result was a damned good heavyweight slugfest that had the fans cheering and Golota's left eye looking like a bright red walnut. To his credit, the 40-year-old Golota won, essentially by—get this—out-toughing Mollo down the stretch. Good for him.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

# February

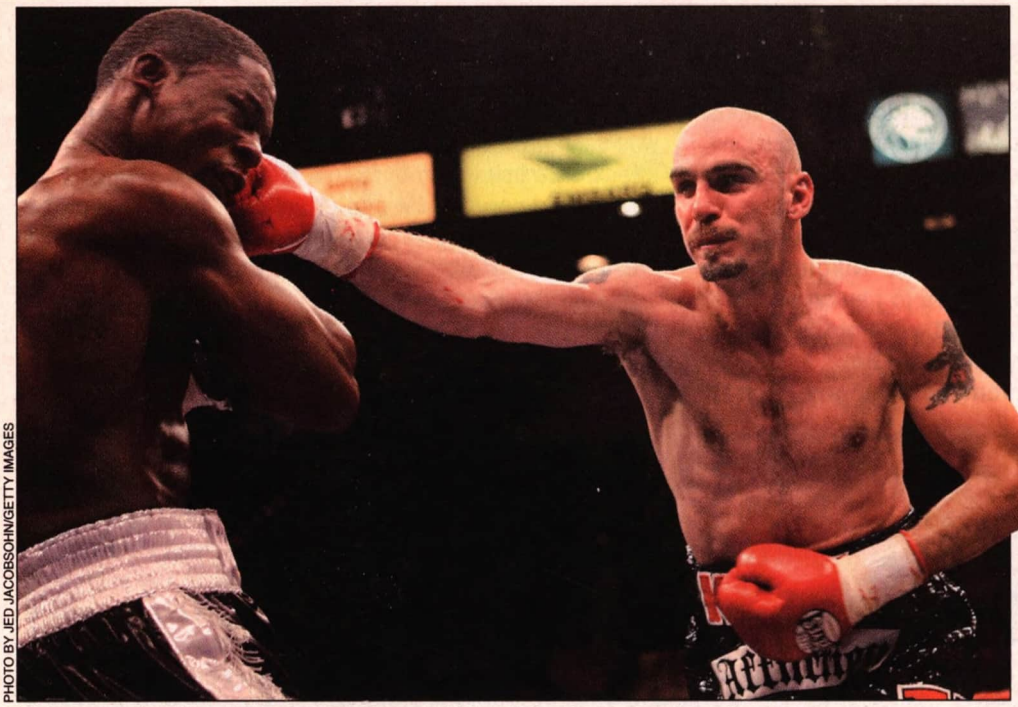


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## NO FLUKE, PAVLIK MASTERS TAYLOR AGAIN

You couldn't blame Jermain Taylor for thinking he had it all figured out this time. After his kayo loss to Kelly Pavlik for the world middleweight title in their first match, he had fallen back on the standard litany of excuses fighters employ in such a situation, leading off with the trite but believable, "I underestimated him and didn't train right," and wrapping it up with the always useful, "I wasn't comfortable with my trainer."

Will we never learn? In this case, that trainer happened to be the exceedingly accomplished Emanuel Steward, who, along with Taylor, assured us going into the first match that Taylor was in the best shape of his life and would be getting back to some of the things he did "as an amateur." It's never a good sign when a professional world champion says he was better as a novice Golden Glover, and that very self-doubt and identity-confusion was evident in Taylor's kayo loss in Atlantic City.

There would be no such mistakes in the rematch. Taylor jettisoned Steward, put his amateur coach in charge, and increased the intensity of his training, to, one presumes, in the contemporary vernacular, such that he gave about 130 percent of himself every day in the gym. Surely this would do the trick. It was widely held that Pavlik couldn't get any better than he'd been in their first fight, but with Taylor there always was room for improvement.

Taylor's improvement showed—kind of. He didn't come within a punch or two of stopping Pavlik early, as he'd done in the first fight, but didn't end up slumped in a corner at the end looking like he'd been de-boned either. Taylor fought conservatively and smartly for most of the fight, staying off the ropes, jabbing, and keeping things in the center of the ring. That was fine with Pavlik, who also fought more conservatively than last time, and also remembered to jab a lot and go to the body.

Taylor did do better than the first time, if you believe losing by scores of 115-113, 117-111, and 116-112 is preferable to being on the receiving end of medium-grade concussion. To most of us, it's a no-brainer, but to a prizefighter who did everything right, could offer no excuses, and came away with a loss anyway, few things could be more painful.

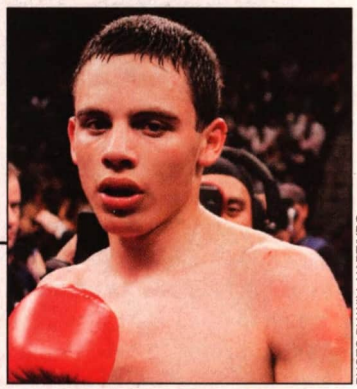


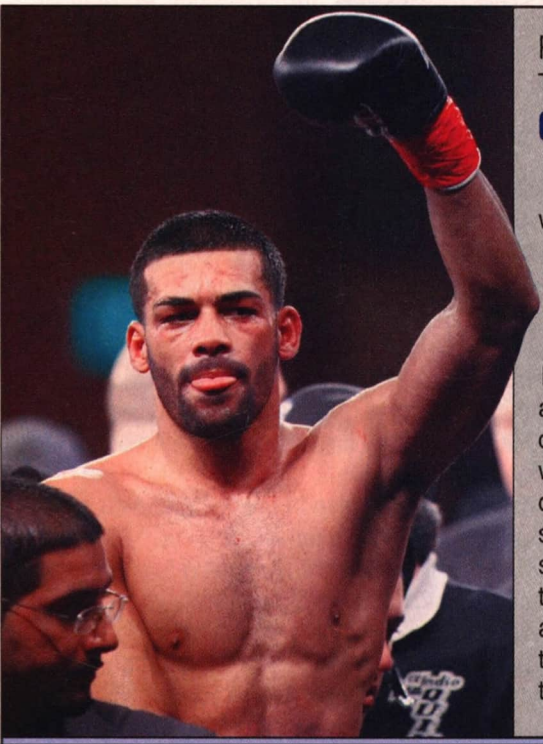
PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

*Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.*

## IN OTHER NEWS

**Wladimir Klitschko** defended the IBF heavyweight title with a decision over **Sultan Ibragimov** in New York ... In a high-level junior bantamweight fight in Las Vegas, **Fernando Montiel** blew out **Martin Castillo** in the fourth round ... WBA light heavyweight titleholder **Danny Green** unexpectedly announced his retirement ... In Leon, Mexico, **Edgar Sosa** recorded his fourth defense of the WBC junior flyweight title with a decision win over **Jesus Iribe**. On the same show, **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** struggled to stop **Jose Cedlaya** in the eighth round ... World welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** filed suit against **Bob Arum** and Top Rank for

money Mayweather said he was owed for his fights against **Arturo Gatti** and **Zab Judah** ... In Temecula, California, fast-rising welterweight **Andre Berto** rolled over squeamish German import **Michel Trabant** in six rounds ... In Lemoore, California, **Robert Guerrero** stopped **Jason Litzau** in the eighth round in defense of the IBF featherweight title ... WBA super middleweight titleholder **Anthony Mundine** decisioned challenger **Nader Hamdan** in Sydney, Australia ... In Montreal, Quebec, **Lucian Bute** stopped former WBA middleweight titleholder **William Joppy** in the 10th round to record his first defense of the IBF 168-pound title ... In New York, popular middleweight **John Duddy** barely got by Canadian **Walid Smichet**, eking out a majority 10-round decision ... Former WBA and light heavyweight titleholder **Reggie Johnson** was indicted on second-degree felony charges of theft ... **Dmitri Kirolov** retained the IBF junior bantamweight title with a draw against **Cecilio Santos** in New York ... Legendary writer and author **W.C. Heinz**, author of *The Professional*, widely considered one of the best boxing novel ever, died at the age of 93.



## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## CARLOS QUINTANA

In some places, Quintana was a 6-1 underdog going into his fight with Paul Williams, everyone's favorite monster du jour. It didn't help that the last time we all saw Quintana, Miguel Cotto was using him as a double-end bag. But Williams didn't come close to duplicating what Cotto had done. Quintana didn't let him. Using his speed, smart movement, and sneaky, straight left hands, Quintana took the early rounds, survived a strong mid-rounds rally, and then cruised down the stretch to take a unanimous decision.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You gotta be smart."

*—Trainer Jeff Mayweather to his charge, Sultan Ibragimov, before the start of the 12th round of Ibragimov's challenge of Wladimir Klitschko, during which Ibragimov had lost every moment of every prior round*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Former WBA heavyweight titleholder Nicolay Valuev, who demonstrated vastly improved skills while shutting out fellow contender Sergei Liakhovich over 12 rounds in Nuremberg, Germany.

**Loser:** Former heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, who was "fired" by Donald Trump on Trump's *Celebrity Apprentice* TV show.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## CRISTIAN MIJARES W 12 JOSE NAVARRO

There were no knockdowns, neither fighter was seriously hurt, and Mijares, in the eyes of most observers, won between seven and 10 rounds. So what was so great? These two put on a high-level display of true boxing skill, with defense, combination punching, bodyshots, footwork, the whole deal. It was an absolute pleasure to watch. Not even the inexplicable scoring of judge Doug Tucker, who scored it 120-108 for Navarro, tainted this wonderful little prizefight.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

# March

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

STORY OF THE MONTH

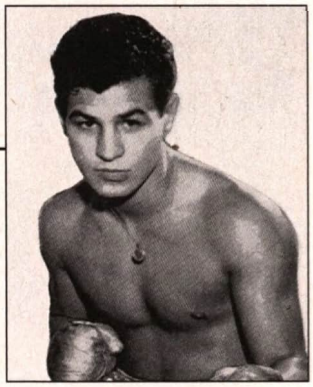
## PACQUIAO-MARQUEZ II: QUESTIONS LEFT UNANSWERED

It wasn't Louis-Schmeling II, but you got the sense things never would be quite right with the world until Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez got together again. Not just because their first meeting, fought four years before, was a corker that ended up pleasing no one, as is the case almost any time a fight ends in a draw. It was important, too, because of what had happened since. Pacquiao went through his trilogy with Erik Morales, then beat Marco Antonio Barrera again. Marquez morphed from primarily a defensive fighter into a swift boxer-puncher and won six fights, including a bloody shutout over Rocky Juarez and his own triumph over Barrera. Pacquiao was thought to have improved, principally in technique, while Marquez appeared to have lost a step or two going into their rematch for the world junior lightweight title.

It did not disappoint. Marquez started fast, but a booming left in the third dropped him. He recovered and did well in the fifth and sixth, but Pacquiao came back in the seventh. Marquez commanded the eighth, but Pacquiao came aback again, almost dropping Marquez in the 10th. The last rounds were no less tight and by the end both men were bloodied and bruised—Marquez over the right eye and Pacquiao both over and under the right eye. The split decision that went to Pacquiao by scores of 112-115, 114-113, and 115-112 contradicted those tallied by many ringside observers, a detail not lost on Marquez.

"I really don't know what else I have to do to be a winner," he said. "I don't know how much more I have to prove. I thought I did everything possible to win this fight. I'm angry. But what could I do? I know I proved that I'm better than Manny Pacquiao."

We should have known going in that a rematch wouldn't resolve anything, not for us, not for the fighters. These two might have to fight six or seven times before we know for sure who's better. And that's okay with us.



*Art Aragon*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In Cancun, Mexico, **Sam Peter** stopped **Oleg Maskaev** in the sixth round to claim the WBC heavyweight title. On the same show, former WBA titleholder **John Ruiz** outworked **Jameel McCline** over 12 rounds ... In Tokyo, Japan, **Daisuke Naito** drew with challenger **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** to retain the WBC flyweight title ... The corpse of **Vunies High**, the 92-year-old sister of Joe Louis, was found frozen outside her apartment at a Southfield, Michigan, assisted living center ... WBA minimumweight beltholder **Yutaka Niida** stopped **Jose Luis Varela** in the sixth round in Tokyo ... 1950s heavyweight contender **Fred "Rocky" Jones** died in Chester, Pennsylvania. He was 87 ... In London, England, world cruiserweight champion **David Haye** knocked out challenger **Enzo Maccarinelli** in the second round ... In Düsseldorf, Germany, **Felix Sturm** defended the WBA middleweight title with a seventh-round

stoppage of **Jamie Pittman** ... In St. Louis, Missouri, **Verno Phillips** edged **Cory Spinks** over 12 rounds to claim the IBF junior middleweight title ... Heavyweight **Travis D. Kauffman** was acquitted of rape and indecent assault charges ... Highly rated lightweight **David Diaz** won a majority decision over journeyman **Ramon Montano** in Las Vegas ... In a major upset in Uncasville, Connecticut, journeyman middleweight and former *Contender* series contestant **Brian Vera** stopped hot Irish prospect **Andy Lee** in seven rounds ... The **Nevada State Athletic Commission** voted to amend its rule for glove size, permitting fighters 135 pounds and over to use eight-ounce mitts instead of 10 ... In Cabazon, California, super middleweight contender **Librado Andrade** stopped Germany's **Robert Stieglitz** in the eighth. On the same show, world lightweight champion **Joel Casamayor** knocked out hard-charging Australian **Michael Katsidis** in 10 rounds ... Longtime referee **Rudy Battle** replaced **Humberto Perez** on the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission ... **Art Aragon**, a top lightweight from the 1940s and '50s and the sport's original "Golden Boy," died in Los Angeles, California, after suffering a stroke. He was 80 years old.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

## FIGHTERS OF THE MONTH
### ISRAEL VAZQUEZ & RAFAEL MARQUEZ

We almost never do it this way, selecting two fighters, but what choice did we have? In this context it's almost meaningless that Vazquez won a decision; given the viciousness of their first two fights, both deserved consideration for having signed for the rubber match in the first place. And then they put together a fight that was even better than the first two, in the process creating one of the great trilogies this sport has seen. For that they both get credit.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"He has to face the fact that when he gets in the ring, every other kid will want to decapitate him because of who he is."

*—Former WBC featherweight titleholder and International Boxing Hall of Fame member Barry McGuigan, discussing the amateur career of his 17-year-old son, Shane McGuigan*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Don King, who got to sit ringside to watch Nate Campbell, his fighter, win the IBF and WBA lightweight titles while beating Juan Diaz, whose split with King before the fight was contentious and public.

**Loser:** Former lightweight champion Jose Luis Castillo, who weighed in for his fight against Timothy Bradley for the WBC junior welterweight title seven pounds over the 140-pound limit and was forced to withdraw.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
### ISRAEL VAZQUEZ W 12 RAFAEL MARQUEZ

It wouldn't have been unreasonable to expect Vazquez and Marquez to play it a little safe after the way they brutalized one another in their two prior meetings. In a sense, it did work that way—Marquez boxed more and slugged less, but Vazquez' late rush forced him to punch more than he wanted to, and the result was spellbinding. And that ending? Right out of Hollywood. It will be a long time indeed before we forget this one.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

# April

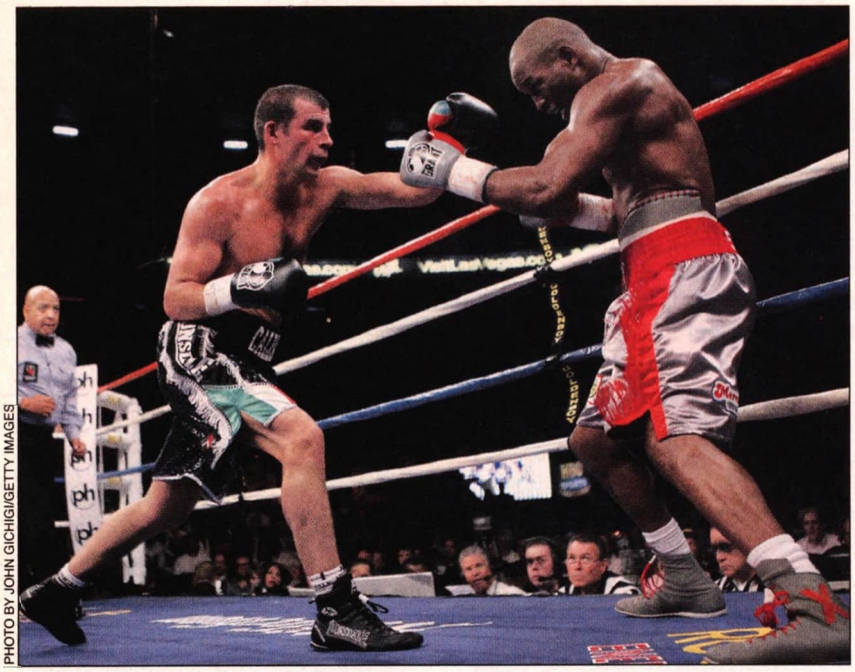


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## CALZAGHE BEATS HOPKINS

When Bernard Hopkins dropped Joe Calzaghe with a right hand in the opening moments of their meeting in Las Vegas for the light heavyweight world title, you could excuse Hopkins and his followers for feeling buoyed. After all, if one of his first punches landed squarely enough to drop the Welshman and he had 11 more long rounds in which to land another or two like it, then certainly sooner or later he would and the fight would be his. It appeared he had Calzaghe right where he wanted him.

In reality, the opposite was true. Hopkins didn't have another moment like it and even if the split decision that went Calzaghe's way by scores of 115-112, 116-111, and 113-114 was disputed by some, there was little substantive doubt at the end who had proved himself the fresher, faster, more demonstrative fighter. And it wasn't Hopkins.

Indeed, despite Hopkins' postfight protestations, he faded horribly down the stretch, the most compelling proof of which came in the 10th when Calzaghe brushed him with a borderline low blow and Hopkins reacted as though felled by a hatchet blow to the groin. He needed the rest.

Ultimately, Hopkins' strategy—to counter Calzaghe's endless flurries with counter right hands—was doomed almost from the start. It would take a more educated and interested eye than is commonly found to credit Hopkins with his short, singular right hands in the face of the deluge of punches Calzaghe threw at him, regardless of their relative lack of pop. Calzaghe was far busier, far quicker, and everything in his body language suggested he was in charge. He was, if not the better boxer, then clearly the faster, younger, more engaged man in the ring, and not even the 43-year-old's bottomless bag of tricks and sleights of hand could convince the majority otherwise. There was little to no outrage over the decision from anyone other than Hopkins.

"I whipped your ass," Calzaghe fairly shouted at Hopkins at the postfight press conference, after Hopkins refused to concede the loss. "You got your ass kicked by the white boy." It was in reply to Hopkins' incendiary prefight remarks about never allowing himself to lose to a white fighter, so you could excuse Calzaghe's boasting. After years suffering the barbs of American critics, he'd beaten Jeff Lacy, Mikkel Kessler, and now Hopkins. He had the right.

As for Hopkins, the drumbeat for his retirement was never louder. He seemed to accept the possibility too that he was done, finally, that it was time for a new phase in his life, one that involved looking back rather than looking forward. But for a man who'd built his life and sense of self around overcoming odds and circumstances and proving others wrong, a quiet life of reflection would be a hard sell. You just knew that he hoped desperately that he had one or two big nights left in him.

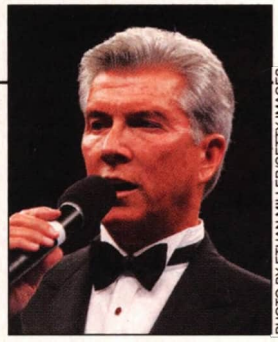


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

*Michael Buffer*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In Atlantic City, New Jersey, WBA welterweight titleholder **Miguel Cotto** and IBF titlist **Antonio Margarito** tuned up for their meeting with knockout wins over **Alfonso Gomez** and **Kermit Cintron**, respectively ... Robes worn by former world heavyweight champion **Joe Frazier** for his third fight with **Muhammad Ali** and for the weigh-in for the second Ali fight were sold at Sotheby's Auction. They went for $40,000 and $20,000, respectively ... In Quezon City, Philippines, top-10 bantamweight **Gerry Penalosa** stopped **Ratanachai Vorapin** in eight rounds ... ESPN announced that it would not renew *The Contender* reality series ... In Tampa, Florida, former world light

heavyweight champion **Antonio Tarver** claimed the IBF belt with a decision over **Clinton Woods** ... In an interesting matchup between super middleweight sons of former champions, **Carlos De Leon Jr.** stopped **James McGirt Jr.** in seven rounds in Miami, Florida ... **Steve Molitor** defended the IBF junior bantamweight title for the fourth time with a decision win over **Fernando Beltran Jr.** in Rama, Ontario ... One-time heavyweight prospect **Joe Mesi** announced a run for a seat in the New York State Senate ... Hot British prospect **Amir Khan** stopped **Martin Kristjansen** in the seventh round in Bolton, England ... **Zsolt Erdei** outpointed **DeAndrey Abron** over 12 rounds in Dresden, Germany ... In Neubrandenburg, Germany, **Sebastian Sylvester** knocked out 40-year-old former WBC junior middleweight and WBA middleweight beltholder **Javier Castillejo** in the 12th round ... Ring announcer **Michael Buffer** underwent surgery to remove cancerous tumors from his throat and neck ... **Andrey Tsurkan** outlasted **Jesse Feliciano** in a junior middleweight slugfest in Bronx, New York ... In Bucharest, Romania, rated light heavyweight **Adrian Diaconu** decisioned **Chris Henry** ... In an intriguing junior middleweight bout held in Vancouver, British Columbia, prospect **Joel Julio** won a decision against **Ishe Smith** ... In San Juan, Puerto Rico, junior flyweight world champion **Ivan Calderon** extended his unbeaten streak with a decision win over challenger **Nelson Dieppe** ... **Polly Lauder Tunney**, widow of former heavyweight champion **Gene Tunney**, died at her home in Stanford, Connecticut, at age 100.

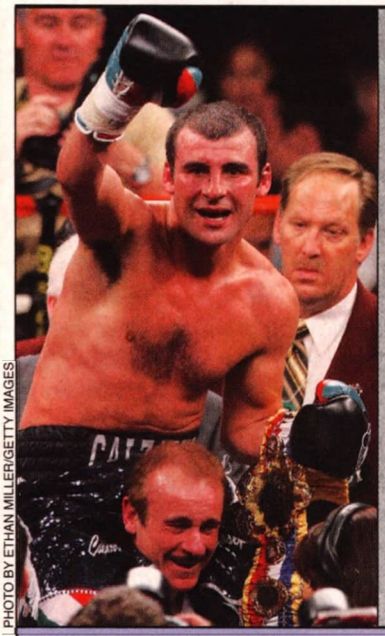


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## JOE CALZAGHE

Give Calzaghe credit—not only for taking the Hopkins fight, but also for taking it in Las Vegas rather than Wales, and, most importantly, for winning it. He did exactly what he had to do: impose his style on Hopkins and make the older man fight at a fast pace that favored Calzaghe's rat-a-tat style. Moreover, he came off the canvas to do it. There are many light heavyweights Hopkins would have beaten that night, but Calzaghe was not one of them.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"If CompuBox was accurate, I'd look like the elephant man right now. My nose should be where my ear is."

*—Bernard Hopkins disputing the CompuBox numbers that showed that Joe Calzaghe landed 232 punches during their fight in Las Vegas*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** World welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather, who donated $140,000 to the West Michigan Sports Commission to pay the operating budget for the National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions, which was to take place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Mayweather's hometown.

**Loser:** O'Neil Bell, who quit after the seventh round of his fight with Tomasz Adamek in Katowice, Poland.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## CHAD DAWSON W 12 GLEN JOHNSON

This was intended to be a mere steppingstone for Dawson to a meeting with Antonio Tarver, but Johnson, even at the age 39, is not one to so readily cooperate. He gave Dawson the toughest fight of his career, rarely backing up, and hurting him with right hands in the third, seventh, and 10th rounds. Dawson did his part, too, hammering away at Johnson's flanks with booming bodyshots and boxing smartly from the outside. That it was Dawson holding on at the end rather than Johnson was telling, but either way it was a superb match between a pair of very good and willing 175-pounders.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER

# May

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## THE TUNE-UP FOR THE FIGHT TO SAVE BOXING II

As far as imitators go, Oscar De La Hoya could have done worse than Steve Forbes. He could have (and almost did) pick Paulie Malignaggi or Sergio Mora to prep for his upcoming rematch with Floyd Mayweather. Both represented the kind of safe, punchless opponent any smart manager would pick going into a mega-money rematch of the kind De La Hoya had coming up in September, so you couldn't blame him for that. That he ultimately decided on Forbes, who was under-powered even against guys his own size, was a reasonable selection, especially given Forbes' long association with the Mayweather family and his lack of experience on the biggest stages, his appearance on *The Contender* notwithstanding.

About midway through De La Hoya's unanimous decision win by scores of 120-108 and 119-109 (twice), the principal difference between Forbes and the fighter he was hired to emulate became clear enough: his relative lack of discomfort with the idea of losing. After landing pretty regularly early on and enough to blacken De La Hoya's right cheekbone, Forbes made the decision in the fight's latter half to content himself with lasting the distance, a concession no doubt formed in part by the ease with which De La Hoya tagged him with hard jabs, left hooks, and uppercuts.

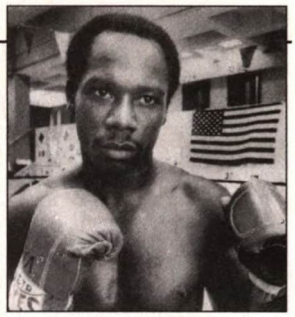
Opinion on how De La Hoya looked was generally split, but it never was about that. The 27,000 (27,000!) who packed The Home Depot Center on Cinco de Mayo weekend weren't there to watch De La Hoya in a life-and-death struggle any more than Spaniards go to the bullring to watch the beast gore the matador.

It was De La Hoya's first appearance in the Los Angeles area since 2000 and that he promised he was in his last year of active fighting no doubt helped ticket sales. Forbes played his part well enough, neither crumbling at De La Hoya's first solid hook nor proving overly offensive. You couldn't at all blame him for arriving at the concession that $400,000 was a nice check to earn for an afternoon's work and why take chances when no one expected you to win in the fist place?

At any rate, with the exception of what tuned out to be a cracked cheekbone on the right side of De La Hoya's million-dollar face, all had gone according to plan and now he had simply had to wait for September, when he'd get his rematch against Mayweather. It was, as they say in business, a done deal.

## IN OTHER NEWS

In Manchester, England, **Ricky Hatton** defended the world junior welterweight title with a tougher-than-expected decision win over veteran **Juan Lazcano** ... In Nottingham, England, super middleweight contender **Carl Froch** stopped **Albert Rybacki** in four rounds ... In a career-best performance, highly touted super middleweight prospect **Andre Dirrell** steamrolled useful **Anthony Henshaw** in five rounds in Santa Ynez, California ... Top 1970s middleweight contender and world title challenger **Tony Licata** died of a heart attack in Louisiana. He was 56 years old ... Exciting junior bantamweight **Jorge Arce** struggled to win a majority decision over **Devid Lookmahanak** in Aguasclientes, Mexico ... Long-time Las Vegas judge **Chuck Giampa** retired ... **Jerry Celestine**, who fought some the best light heavyweights of the 1980s, including **Michael Spinks**, **Eddie Mustafa Muhammad**, and **Marvin Johnson**, died at age 59 ... Former WBA flyweight titleholder **Eric Morel** continued his comeback with a third-round knockout of **Jose Bernal** in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico ... In Camp Lejuene, North Carolina, **Edner Cherry** knocked



*Jerry Celestine*

out two-time former WBC lightweight titleholder **Stevie Johnston** in the 10th round. On the same show, **Johnnie Edwards** stopped comebacking former WBA featherweight beltholder **Freddie Norwood** in the seventh ... **Joe Frazier**'s landmark gym in Philadelphia was put up for sale ... **Firat Arslan** easily retained the WBA cruiserweight belt with a unanimous decision over American TV favorite **Darnell Wilson** in Stuttgartt, Germany ... Former IBF lightweight titleholder **Paul Spadafora** was released from prison ... In Primm, Nevada, rising junior lightweight star **Yuriorkis Gamboa** was dropped and taken the distance by veteran **Darling Jimenez** ... In Cabazon, California, dangerous junior featherweight **Jhonny Gonzalez** kayoed former IBF super flyweight beltholder **Mauricio Pastrana** in four rounds ... The career of former IBF heavyweight titlist **Chris Byrd** came to an apparent end in Las Vegas, Nevada, when, fighting at light heavyweight, he was stopped in the ninth round by **Shaun George** ... Rising junior middleweights **James Kirkland** and **Alfredo Angulo** knocked out **Eromosele Albert** and **Richard Gutierrez** in the first and fifth rounds, respectively ... Capable 1980s featherweight **Gino Gelormino** was killed when he fell 35 feet from New York City's Tribourough Bridge, where he was part of a construction crew working on the structure. He was 47 ... In San Luis Potosi, Mexico, highly rated junior bantamweight **Fernando Montiel** kayoed **Luis Maldonado** in the third round ... Japan-based Chinese junior welterweight **Cho He** died 15 days after suffering a brain injury in a loss to **Daichi Sakoda** in Tokyo. He was 22 years old.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
### TIMOTHY BRADLEY

Asking Bradley, a relative novice, to go to Nottingham and beat the more experienced Junior Witter for the WBC junior welterweight title seemed like a lot to ask, a perception reflected in the 6-1 odds against him. Turned out it wasn't a lot to ask at all. Bradley was faster, stronger, and smarter, and his heavy punches took Witter out of his game plan. A sixth-round knockdown, the product of a whistling overhand right, took whatever fight Witter had in him, and from there Bradley cruised to a split decision win that should have been unanimous.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I'm not an assassin. I'm just doing my job and trying to give a good fight. I respect all Mexicans."

*—Manny Pacquiao, rejecting the "Mexican Assassin" nickname given him for all his wins over Mexican fighters*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** South Korean junior lightweight Ji-Hoon Kim, who, with a record of 13-5 (10), was on the verge of getting stopped in the first round by the far more experienced Kobo Gogoladze, and ended up turning the tables on Gogoladze and stopping *him* in the first.

**Loser:** IBF junior welterweight beltholder Paulie Malignaggi, who made the regrettable decision to wear hair extensions into his difficult decision win over Lovemore Ndou in England, and had to have them sheared off between rounds midway through the fight.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
### CRISTIAN MIJARES W 12 ALEXANDER MUNOZ

Title unification fights were in vogue in 2008, and Mijares' decision over powerpunching Munoz was one of the best. Though Mijares won by a bigger margin than the split decision he received would imply and was never in real trouble, Munoz never stopped trying and remained a threat until very late. He winged punch after punch, which gave Mijares ample opportunity to showcase his sublime skills. It was as thoroughly entertaining as was Mijares' win over Jose Navarro in February.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

# June

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## MAYWEATHER WALKS AWAY

You had to go back a long way to find this kind of sudden, unlikely, and highly important retirement. This wasn't Danny Green abruptly calling it quits. It wasn't even Felix Trinidad walking away at the tender age of 29 after rolling over Hacine Cherifi.

Maybe you have to go all the way back to featherweight great Vicente Saldivar calling it a day at the age of 24, after beating Howard Winstone in their third fight. Fighters at Mayweather's age and level—just 31 and the best boxer in the world, pound-for-pound—don't just walk away.

Not only don't they walk away like that, they don't do it when they have a huge money fight a couple months down the road. Mayweather was scheduled to meet Oscar De La Hoya in a rematch to the biggest-grossing fight ever and was a clear favorite to repeat the victory he'd scored in the first fight. Not only that, he was coming off a smashing 10th-round stoppage of junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton. Why now?

"I have said numerous times and after several of my fights over the past two years that I might not fight again," Mayweather said in a prepared statement.

"At the same time, I loved competing and winning and also wanted to continue my career for the fans, knowing they were there for me and enjoyed watching me fight.

"However, after many sleepless nights and intense soul-searching, I realized I could no longer base my decision on anything but my own personal happiness, which I no longer could find."

The fight world, of course, was skeptical, but most of those close to Mayweather expressed little surprise. Longtime Mayweather confidant Leonard Ellerby told the press he was surprised it hadn't happened sooner, and that he was certain Mayweather was serious. Others believed it was a way for Mayweather to screw De La Hoya out of a significant payday.

Still others thought it was Mayweather's way of getting back at his father for agreeing to train De La Hoya for the rematch: Backing out of the match would deny the elder Mayweather of the huge fee he would collect as De La Hoya's trainer, win or lose. Mayweather gave no hint of any of that in his statement.

"I have finally made up my mind, spoken to my family, particularly my mother, and made my decision," he said.

Still almost no one believed Mayweather's retirement would prove permanent. After all, even Saldivar came back eventually.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

*Kostya Tszyu*

## IN OTHER NEWS

Welterweight star **Paul Williams** avenged his loss to **Carlos Quintana** with a first-round stoppage in their rematch in Uncasville, Connecticut. On the same show, Season One *Contender* series winner **Sergio Mora** upset veteran **Vernon Forrest** to win the WBC junior middleweight title ... In Atlantic City, New Jersey, **Kelly Pavlik** defended the world middleweight title with an easy third-round bludgeoning of England's **Gary Lockett**. On the same card, **Juan Manuel Lopez** blew out **Daniel Ponce De Leon** in the first round ... Producers of *The Contender* announced they had reached an agreement to air the series on the Versus network ... WBA titlist **Celestino Caballero** defended the junior featherweight belt in San Juan de Los Moros, Venezuela, with a 12th-round stoppage of **Lorenzo Parra** ... Super bantamweight prospect **Jonas Hernandez** was shot to death in Agua Dilla, Puerto Rico. He was 25 years old ... Top junior welterweight contenders **Herman Ngoudjo** and

**Souleyman M'Baye** met in Montreal, Quebec, with Ngoudjo winning a comfortable decision ... One-time welter and junior middleweight clubfighter **Eddie Van Kirk** died from gunshot wounds he suffered while ejecting a burglar from his home the prior November ... In Nonthaburi, Thailand, **Vusi Malinga** knocked out two-time former bantamweight titleholder **Veerapol Sahaprom** in the fourth round ... **Larry Holmes**, **Eddie Perkins**, **Frank Warren**, and **Joe Koizumi** were among those inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York ... In Las Vegas, journeyman heavyweight **Monte Barrett** starched puffed-up prospect **Tye Fields** inside of a round ... Former world junior welterweight champion **Kostya Tszyu** officially announced his retirement from boxing ... In Melbourne, Australia, former titleholders and Boxing Hall of Fame members **Azumah Nelson**, 49, and **Jeff Fenech**, 44, met for a third time, with Fenech winning a majority decision ... In Memphis, Tennessee, rising heavyweight **Chris Arreola** beat **Chazz Witherspoon** by third-round disqualification ... In a super middleweight bout in Hollywood, Florida, IBF middleweight beltholder **Arthur Abraham** blasted out **Edison Miranda** in five rounds ... Junior flyweight **Samora Msophi** died from injuries he suffered in a knockout loss to South African 108-pound champion **Mfundo Gwayana**. Msophi was 24 years old.

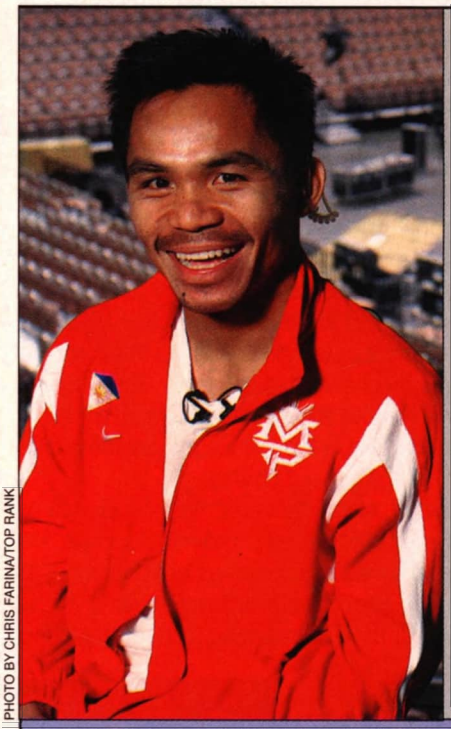


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
### MANNY PACQUIAO

You could make a case for Paul Williams here because of his rematch win over Carlos Quintana, but Pacquiao's demolition of durable David Diaz was simply more spectacular. It wasn't just that Pacquiao won; we all expected him to win. It was that in his first fight at 135 pounds he appeared faster, stronger, and better than he ever had. Poor Diaz, who somehow lasted into the ninth round, never had a chance. It was a masterpiece.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"How can he tell the people in Grand Rapids he's a billionaire? He won't be a billionaire in a billion years. Mark my words, someday he'll be running through the streets of Grand Rapids broke."

*—Floyd Mayweather Sr., discussing Floyd Jr.'s financial situation in an interview published in* ***The Grand Rapids Press***

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Oscar De La Hoya, who donated $3.5-million to Green Dot Public Schools in California, a non-profit charter school system dedicated to enhancing education to public school students in the Los Angeles area.

**Loser:** Evander Holyfield, whose $10-million estate, according to *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, was under foreclosure and scheduled to be auctioned by Washington Mutual Bank.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
### STEVE LUEVANO D 12 MARIO SANTIAGO

Any fight in which both fighters hit the deck is a good one, and it's even better when they do it in the same round. That's what happened here in the second, as first Luevano and then Santiago ate canvas. From then on it was a back-and-forth battle, with Luevano doing well in the later rounds before getting rocked again in the 10th. He stepped on the pedal in the 11th and 12th to pull out the draw, but you could easily make the case that Santiago deserved the nod.

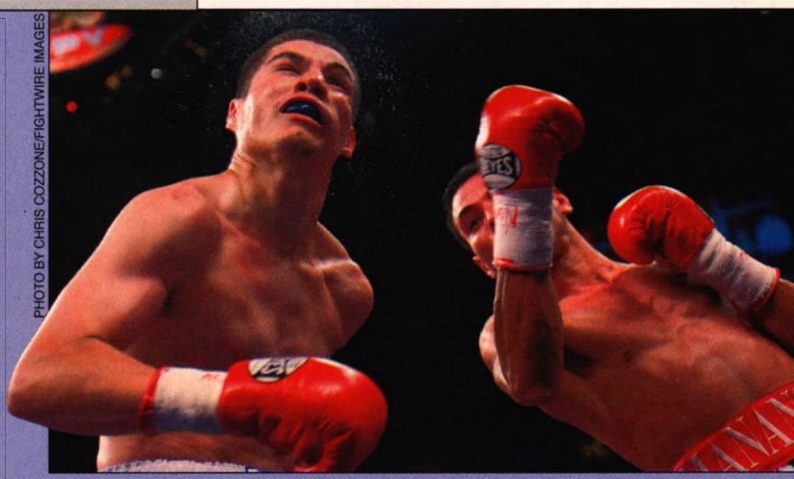


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

# July

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

## STORY OF THE MONTH
## DREAM FIGHT AT WELTERWEIGHT

It was almost too good to be true. This was one of those dream fights we boxing junkies sit around and fantasize about when we've got nothing better to do, or when the wife is yakking away about some crisis or another that doesn't concern us (the house is sliding into the sea, we're bankrupt, the cat is on fire, etc.) and we have to pretend we're listening.

Few of us thought it would happen, even though Top Rank promoted both guys. Fights like this just didn't get made; that was something we'd gotten used to over the years, and many of us had already analyzed and filed away "Cotto-Margarito In Their Prime" for future use in pointless, beer-fueled arguments over who might have won had they ever met.

Then a few things happened: Cotto got by Shane Mosley, and Margarito, in his first fight since losing to Paul Williams, looked awesome running over poor Golden Johnson. The third thing? Floyd Mayweather lost interest in being a fighter and became very interested in making many piles of money for taking comparatively little risk.

Judging by his actions, it became clear that Mayweather would voluntarily have pins stuck in his eyes before he'd face any top welterweight contender, and thus Cotto and Margarito, prizefighters through and through, were left with the delicious alternative of facing one another. Presto. Dream fight made.

Did we hear you asking for a modern-day equivalent to Wilfredo Gomez-Carlos Zarate? Here it was. Did you want to know who the best welterweight in the world was, especially after Mayweather announced his retirement? This was a huge step in the right direction. Did you often ponder whether Cotto's power and skills could overcome Margarito's near legendary chin and toughness? Coming right up. And, finally, did you want to stick it in the faces of all those smug MMA fans who gloat that in their little sport, the best face the best all the time? Here was your chance.

Then the fight came off. No controversy. No fake drama or bad scorecards, no bad calls or questionable outcomes. No phony build-up or melodramatic back-stories or shenanigans. Just two exceptionally good, skilled, tough world-class 147-pound fighters trying their damnedest to beat the living hell out of one another. They both succeeded, but Margarito did it better than Cotto in the end, and whether or not it turned out the way it had in our fantasies, no one could complain.

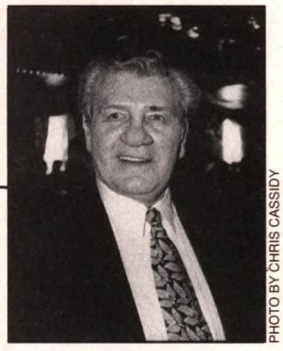


PHOTO BY CHRIS CASSIDY

***Joe Miceli***

## IN OTHER NEWS

In Hamburg, Germany, heavyweight titleholder **Wladimir Klitschko** stopped challenger **Tony Thompson** in the 11th round ... In Las Vegas, Nevada, junior welterweight contender **Kendall Holt** twice climbed off the canvas to stop **Ricardo Torres** in the first round of their rematch ... Former WBC light heavyweight titleholder **Mate Parlov**, 59, died of lung cancer in his hometown of Pula, Croatia ... **Felix Sturm** retained the WBA middleweight title with a decision win over **Randy Griffith** in Halle, Germany ... World junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton** made his debut as a standup comedian in Stevenage, England, raising money for the Murry Foundation in Limpopo, South Africa, which looks after children born with HIV ... **Ulises Solis** recorded his fifth defense of the IBF light flyweight title with a shutout decision win over challenger **Glenn Donaire** ...

Former South African heavyweight titleholder **Mike "The Tank" Schutte** died of cancer in Vanderbijlpark at age 57 ... In Montreal, Quebec, **Daniel Santos** won the WBA junior middleweight title with a highlight-reel knockout of **Joachim Alcine**. On the same show, resurgent junior middleweight **Alex Bunema** stopped **Walter Matthysse** in the sixth ... New Brunswick, Canada, boxing legend **Jerry Doiron**, onetime trainer of **Yvonne Durelle**, died of cancer. He was 88 years old ... Former multi-division titleholder **James Toney** scored a third-round kayo of former heavyweight champion **Hasim Rahman** in Temecula, California. The outcome was later changed to a no-contest, as the stoppage was due to a cut that was caused by a headbutt ... New York junior welterweight **Edgar Santana** was arrested for allegedly participating in a major cocaine transaction ... **Daisuke Naito** rallied to retain the WBC flyweight title with a 10th-round kayo of feisty challenger **Tomonobu Shimizu** in Tokyo, Japan ... Popular 1950s TV fighter **Joe Miceli** died at age 79 ... Former IBF super middleweight beltholder **Jeff Lacy** struggled to a decision win over puncher **Epifiano Mendoza** in Cabazon, California ... Welterweight contender **Oscar Diaz** collapsed and fell into a coma after the 10th round of his fight with **Delvin Rodriguez** in San Antonio, Texas... Former world lightweight champion and 1960s West Coast star **Mando Ramos** died of respiratory distress at his home in San Pedro, California. He was 59.

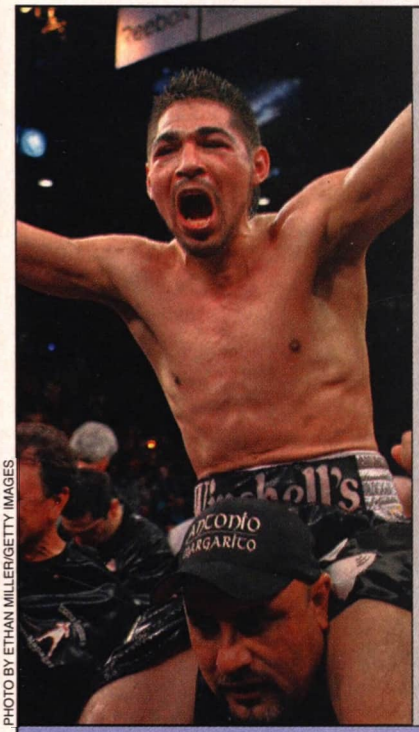


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## ANTONIO MARGARITO

To win the way Margarito does you have to accept that you are going to get hit. You're going to get hit a lot, and if the other guy is a very good hitter, it's going to hurt. A lot. Margarito walked through Cotto's best left hooks and right hands as if Cotto, one of the heaviest-handed guys at 147, was Paulie Malignaggi. There are very few fighters on this planet who have the fortitude, toughness, and self-belief it takes to make Miguel Cotto look like Malignaggi. Margarito did it.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"We promised you violence, and we gave you violence!"

*—HBO blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley during the Antonio Margarito-Miguel Cotto broadcast*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Colorful journeyman junior welterweight Emanuel Augustus, who was selected as the Most Memorable Fighter of the Decade by ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* viewers.

**Loser:** Don King, who lost a $2.5-billion libel lawsuit he had filed against Walt Disney Company, in which King claimed that ESPN, which is owned by Disney, acted with malice in a profile it did on King in 2004. The judge disagreed, noting that ESPN "was not required to continue its investigation until it found somebody who would defend the plaintiff."

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## ANTONIO MARGARITO KO 11 MIGUEL COTTO

This one would have been a corker even if Cotto had managed to survive the last couple of rounds and taken it to the cards. It's true that Cotto's movement precluded a lot of toe-to-toe exchanges, but there were still enough head-rattling punches landed over the first 10 rounds to satisfy even the most bloodthirsty among us. Put it this way: The buildup was enormous, and at the end you didn't hear anyone griping about what a letdown it had been. It came as advertised.

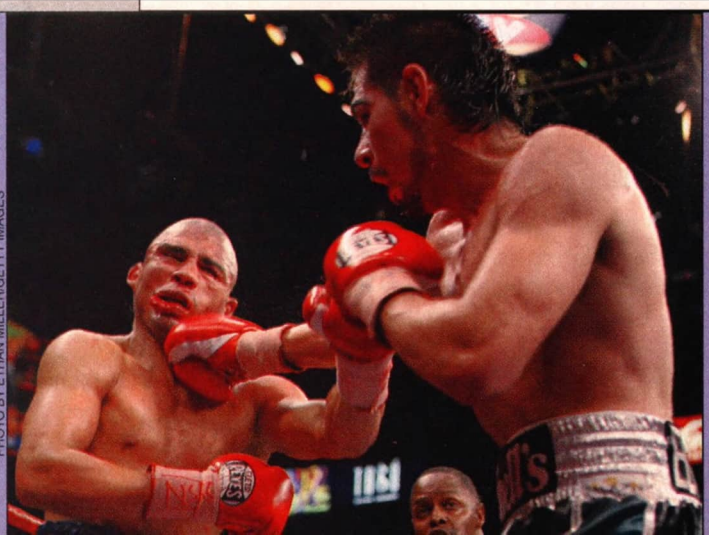


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

# August

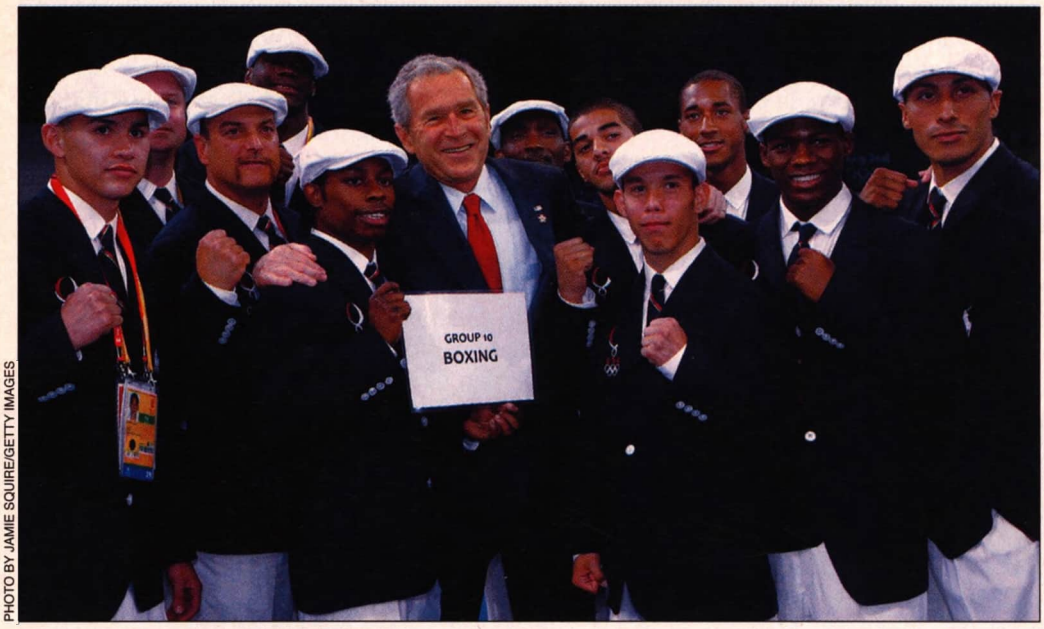



PHOTO BY JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## WORST. U.S. TEAM. EVER.

Nobody expected a repeat of 1976, or even of 1984, for that matter. But one lousy medal? And a bronze at that? Yes. The lone United States Olympic medal winner in boxing, a heavyweight named Deontay Wilder, somehow managed to win the bronze with less than three years of boxing experience, while the very experienced U.S. boxers took early exits. World amateur champion Rau'shee Warren, gone in the tournament's first round. Shawn Estrada gone in the second. Demetrius Andrade, Luis Yanez, Raynell Williams. Gone, gone, gone.

The culprit was easy to find, of course. It was that evil foul-smelling scoring system that's too computerized and corrupt and it robbed all our nice American boys of their gold medals. Yes. That was it.

Except lightweight Sadam Ali and light welterweight Javier Molina wouldn't have won their bouts if they entered the ring carrying pick-axes; they were overwhelmed. Andrade, in his losing bout, failed to score a single point in the first round and overall hardly punched at all. Molina, it was revealed afterward, had fought with a hole in his lung. Yanez, in his loss, didn't do much better. They just didn't move their hands enough. But everyone else did. Even the guys who had never moved their hands before.

China won its first two gold medals ever in Olympic boxing. Same with the Dominican Republic and Mongolia. Ireland, of all places, took three medals. Armenia, Mauritius, and India each brought home boxing medals for the first time. Cuba, it was no surprise, won more medals than anyone with eight (though for the first time ever it won no gold).

You had to go back 70 years to find a U.S. Olympic boxing team that was nearly as bad. That was the 1948 team that managed a single, lowly silver medal. The U.S. boycotted the 1980 Olympics and didn't send a team in 1908. A wise guy might suggest we should have boycotted this one too.

Afterward, coach Dan Campbell "resigned." It was too late. But there was plenty of blame to go around. USA Boxing. The coaches. The fighters. The centralization of the coaching system, which separated the fighters from their local gyms and coaches, then mandated inactivity once the team was selected. So much blame, so many excuses. One lousy medal. And a bronze at that. What a disgrace.

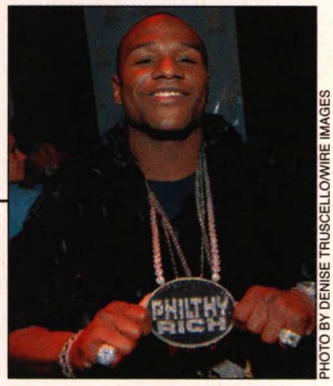



PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIRE IMAGES

*Floyd Mayweather*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In an important welterweight bout in Las Vegas, Nevada, **Joshua Clottey** won a technical decision over **Zab Judah** ... In Tacoma, Washington, super middleweight prospect **Andre Dirrell** stopped **Mike Paschall** in four rounds ... Former WBA flyweight titleholder **Eric Morel** continued his comeback with a 12-round decision win over **Heriberto Ruiz** in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. On the same show, world junior flyweight champion **Ivan Calderon** scored a seventh-round technical win over **Hugo Cazares** ... 1950s middleweight contender **Rocky Castellani** died in Atlantic City, New Jersey, at 89 years old ... In a matchup of former *Contender* series contestants at super middleweight, **Peter Manfredo** stopped **Donnie McCray** in two rounds ... In Berlin, Germany, **Nikolay Valuev** outpointed **John Ruiz** over 12 rounds to regain the

WBA heavyweight title … 1996 Olympic bronze medal winner and one-time junior middleweight prospect **Roshii Wells** was shot to death in Las Vegas, Nevada. The father of six was 31 years old … **Cristian Mijares** defended the WBC super flyweight title for the sixth time and the WBA belt for the first with a third-round stoppage of **Chatchai Sasakul** … **Floyd Mayweather** had $7.2-million worth of jewelry stolen from his Las Vegas home … Top-ranked 1950s and '60s lightweight **Kenny Lane** died of a heart attack in Michigan at the age of 76 … In Chicago, Illinois, exciting light heavyweight prospect **Tavoris Cloud** stopped veteran contender **Julio Gonzalez** in the 10th round … Scottish featherweight **Scott Harrison** was sentenced to 10 months in prison after pleading guilty to drunk driving and assault charges in Glasgow … Promising junior middleweight **Ronny Vargas** was shot and killed in the Bronx, New York … In Rama, Ontario, Canada, **Steve Molitor** retained the IBF junior featherweight title by knocking out **Ceferino Labarda** in the 10th round … Former middleweight contender **Alex Ramos** suffered a massive seizure and was hospitalized after being found unconscious in his home … Former featherweight contender **Paul Jorgensen** died in Port Arthur, Texas. He was 74 … **Jabir Herbert Muhammad**, son of Nation of Islam leader **Elijah Muhammad,** died following heart surgery at the University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago. Herbert managed **Muhammad Ali**'s career from 1966 to 1981 … Middleweight **Joey Gilbert** agreed to pay a $10,000 fine for a positive steroid test as part of a settlement with the Nevada State Athletic Commission, and also received a one-year suspension … Former world bantamweight champion **Vic Toweel** died in Sydney, Australia. He was 80.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## VIC DARCHINYAN

A lot of guys would have fallen apart emotionally after being knocked flat the way Darchinyan was by Nonito Donaire back in July 2007. Not Darchinyan. After a win and a draw against Federico Catubay and Z Gorres, respectively, he crushed Dimitri Kirilov in five rounds to claim the IBF super flyweight title in Tacoma, Washington.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I think they most definitely are going to be psyched out. We have a psychologist around, and we're going to make sure she'll talk to the team. I'm sure all of them are going to be psyched out by this."

*—U.S. Olympic boxing team coach Dan Campbell to* ***The New York Times*** *after American boxer Rau'shee Warren, a favorite to win the gold, lost in his first match*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Carlos Vinan, a 7-6-3 (1) unknown fighting our of Newark, New Jersey, who upset undefeated prospect Andrew Cancio in their junior lightweight meeting in Las Vegas.

**Loser:** Junior middleweight prospect Anthony Thompson, who was stopped on a cut by Ishmail Arvin in Washington, D.C., even though video evidence clearly showed the cut was caused by a headbutt.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## MATT GODFREY KO 4 EMMANUEL NWODO

You could make the argument that referee Danny Schiavone stopped this too quickly, but it was a corker until then. Nwodo, a 3-1 underdog, dropped Godfrey in the first, but wasn't credited with a knockdown until he cleanly dropped him again in the third. Just when it appeared he was on the verge of a kayo win, Godfrey wobbled him and busted open his nose in the fourth. Godfrey pounced and beat Nwodo around the ring, prompting Schiavone to stop it.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

# September

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

STORY OF THE MONTH

## DROWNING IN THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

You couldn't blame Joel Casamayor for taking this fight. There was a time, not too long before, when you'd have thought he had to be crazy to get in there with Juan Manuel Marquez. Remember how awful he'd looked against Jose Armando Santa Cruz? We all thought he was used up for good that night, and deep down he must have thought so too. But then he surprised us, and probably himself, too, when he stopped crude but tough Michael Katsidis.

Casamayor must have felt he'd found the Fountain of Youth, that even at an alleged 37 years old (many think older), he could hold his own with the younger, though by only two years, Marquez. So what that Marquez had given Manny Pacquiao all he could handle. This was Casamayor's division. And the old man wasn't done yet.

But he was. Not early in the fight, when Marquez seemed troubled by Casamayor's southpaw stance and boatload of tricks, spins, and maneuvers learned over a lifetime spent in rings. But eventually, Marquez' faster hands started finding the mark, and Casamayor, a beat slower and his blows not as sharp, couldn't keep up.

"He knew how to control my punches and I had a bad night," Casamayor said afterward.

That's putting it mildly. Marquez cut him over the left eye in the fourth, and though Casamayor had his moments throughout, the longer it went the worse it got for him. Marquez hurt him in the 10th and in the 11th dropped him with a hard right. Casamayor rose and was pummeled and dropped again, which prompted referee Tony Weeks to stop it.

"I was the more intelligent fighter," said Marquez. "I knew how to neutralize his left hand. I threw a lot of combinations because I knew I couldn't win with just one punch."

The win didn't get Marquez any closer, necessarily, to a third fight with Pacquiao, which is what the move to lightweight was all about. Pacquiao was committed to a much bigger and richer fight with Oscar De La Hoya. But after that, who was to say? Maybe they could do it again. And even if he never got Pacquiao again, if Pacquiao moved all the way up to cruiserweight to avoid a third meeting, well, Marquez would have to live with it, and he has nothing to be ashamed of. Beating a guy who had found the Fountain of Youth and winning THE RING lightweight championship along the way was no small feat.

*Joey Giardello*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In an junior middleweight fight in Carson, California, **Shane Mosley** knocked out **Ricardo Mayorga** in the 12th round ... In Las Vegas, **Vernon Forrest** regained the WBC junior middleweight title with a decision win over **Sergio Mora** ... In Houston, Texas, comebacking former titleholder **Jesus Chavez** knocked out **Andres Ledesma** in nine ... **Timothy Bradley** recorded his first defense of the WBC junior welterweight strap with a decision over **Edner Cherry** in Biloxi, Mississippi ... In Lviv, Ukraine, **Andreas Kotelnik** retained the WBA junior welterweight title, outpointing challenger **Norio Kimura** over 12 rounds ... In an upset at junior lightweight in Manchester, England, **Nicky Cook** beat **Alex Arthur** by unanimous decision ... Undefeated middleweight prospect **James Kirkland** blew out **Ricardo Cortes** in two rounds in Austin, Texas ... Well-known British fight figure **Brian Robinson** died at age 73 of a suspected heart attack ... In Houston,

Texas, **Juan Diaz** decisioned Australian puncher **Michael Katsidis** over 12 rounds ... South African featherweight titleholder **Edward "Spoiler" Mpofu** was detained by police after plaster of paris was allegedly found inside his gloves following a six-round decision loss to **Thanduxolo Dyani** in East London ... In Carson, California, undefeated welterweight **Andre Berto** decisioned **Steve Forbes** over 12 rounds ... **Joan Guzman** had to pull out of his challenge of IBF and WBA titleholder **Nate Campbell** when he failed to make the 135-pound weight limit ... In a terrible mismatch in Panama City, Panama, WBA super bantamweight titleholder **Celestino Caballero** stopped 43-year-old **Elvis Mejia** in the first round ... Top 10 heavyweight contender and former cruiserweight beltholder **Juan Carlos Gomez** decisioned **Vladimir Virchis** in Hamburg, Germany ... **Oscar De La Hoya** announced that **Nacho Beristain** would train him for his upcoming fight with **Manny Pacquiao** ... One-time junior middleweight title challenger **Guillermo Jones** stopped **Firat Arslan** in 10 rounds to claim the WBA cruiserweight title ... In Temecula, California, junior middleweight **Sergio Martinez** scored a dazzling eight-round stoppage win over longtime contender **Alex Bunema** ... **Edgar Sosa** recovered from a ninth-round knockdown to record his sixth defense of the WBC 108-pound title with a decision over **Sonny Boy Jaro** in Mexico City, Mexico ... New Jersey-based trainer **Oscar Juarez**, who worked with **Naseem Hamed**, **Acelino Freitas**, and **Johnny Tapia**, among others, died of pancreatic cancer at age 47 ... Former world middleweight champion and Boxing Hall of Fame member **Joey Giardello** died in a nursing home in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. He was 78.

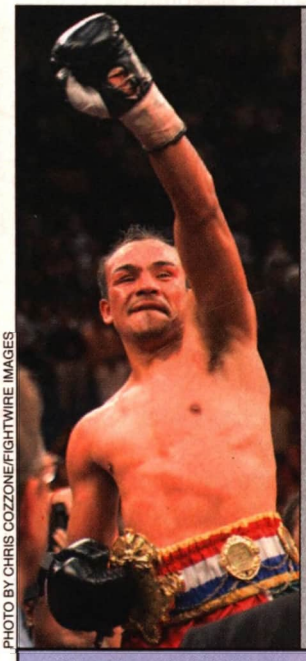


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

Marquez could have hung around the safe confines of 130 pounds, but when he said he was going to chase Manny Pacquiao after Pacquiao moved up to lightweight, he wasn't kidding. And he didn't go after a soft touch, either—he went after world lightweight champion Joel Casamayor, and proceeded to do what no one had done before: stop him. Marquez' 11th-round kayo win was a career highlight, and from top to bottom one of his most complete performances.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I'm too long in the tooth to change, but you're never too long in the tooth to learn."

*—Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, talking about how new trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. will affect his fighting style*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Heavyweight great Jack Johnson, for whom a bill requesting a posthumous pardon for violation of the Mann Act in 1913 passed the House by unanimous voice vote.

**Loser:** Promoter Frank Warren, who bankrolled Amir Khan's pay-per-view show in Great Britain, only to see his hot prospect get starched in the first round by unknown puncher Breidis Prescott.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## ROCKY JUAREZ KO 11 JORGE BARRIOS

This wasn't the wild free-for-all we expected, but it came close. Barrios did well early, moving and punching enough to convince Juarez to keep his hands to himself. Juarez started digging hard shots to Barrios' body in the middle rounds, and by the 10th, Barrios was spent. Juarez was just getting warmed up though, and he floored Barrios in the 11th. When he rose, Barrios appeared to have a second tongue. It was actually a large chunk of his lip that had torn and was flapping around indiscriminately inside his mouth. Fight over. A perfect ending.

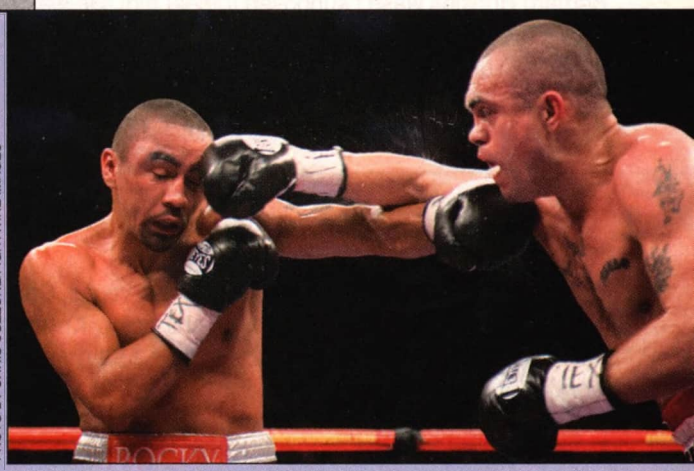


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

# October

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

STORY OF THE MONTH

## THE OLD MAN BY THE SEA

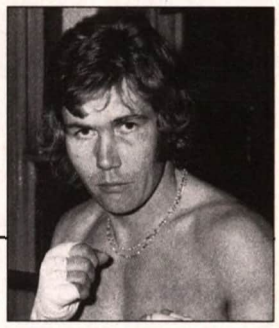
You could clearly see the look of shock and bewilderment on Kelly Pavlik's face as early as the second round. And as the early rounds passed one after another into the Atlantic Ocean right outside, shock and bewilderment gave way to flashes of contempt, the kind the hardest fighters display when they're getting schooled. Later you could make out desperation on Pavlik's face, and then, eventually, resignation. It was remarkable to see, this young, powerpunching star melting down emotionally over 12 rounds. But then, he had good reason to.

Bernard Hopkins wasn't supposed to beat him. He wasn't supposed to be able to move, or to punch with any kind of speed or authority, or really to do much of anything but grab, hold, and make things as uncomfortable and as ugly as he could. You couldn't blame Pavlik or his faithful followers for thinking that would be the case. That's what Hopkins had done, with increasing frequency over the previous several years, his loss to Joe Calzaghe last time out the prime example.

But this Hopkins wasn't the same old Hopkins. He moved. He speared Pavlik with jabs and rattled him with right crosses and bodyshots. It was the most complete performance he'd given maybe since he'd destroyed Felix Trinidad and he was doing it as well in the late rounds as he had in the fight's opening moments. That was the worst of it for Pavlik and his team, who to some degree or another had counted on the old man slowing down in the fight's latter half.

Many of the 11,332 who crowded Boardwalk Hall had come to see Pavlik dispose of the old man once and for all, and many—the venerable Freddie Roach, who trained Hopkins for Calzaghe, among them—had counseled against Hopkins taking the fight. It was too dangerous. He was too old. And Pavlik was too strong. The odds were 4-1.

So you could understand it when Hopkins, after winning by scores of 119-106, 118-108, and 117-109 stood at the ring's edge and glared out at the writers in the press section, much the way he did after beating Trinidad in 2001. He'd defied them all again, the way he had against Trinidad, against Winky Wright, against Antonio Tarver, and now against Pavlik. I'll keep doing this, he seemed to be saying, until you recognize once and for all how great I am. He could have retired right there in the ring. He'd proved his point.



*Kevin Finnegan*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In an significant light heavyweight fight in Las Vegas, **Chad Dawson** beat former light heavyweight champion **Antonio Tarver** by unanimous decision ... Former heavyweight contender **Joe Mesi** won the Democratic primary for New York State Senate ... **Aaron Davis** was appointed the new commissioner of the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board, taking over for acting commissioner **Sylvester Cuyler**. Cuyler was the assistant to longtime commissioner **Larry Hazzard** ... 1950s welterweight champion **Johnny Saxton** died at age 78 ... Cruiserweight **Steve Cunningham** was presented with The Briscoe Award as Philadelphia's Fighter of the Year ... Junior featherweight sensation **Juan Manuel Lopez** flattened **Cesar Figueroa** in one round in Hato Rey,

Puerto Rico ... WBC lightweight titleholder **Nate Campbell** declared bankruptcy after his fight with **Joan Guzman**, which would have paid him $300,000, was called off when Guzman couldn't make weight ... In Tokyo, WBA featherweight titleholder **Chris John** recorded his 10th defense of the title with a unanimous decision win over challenger **Hiroyuki Enoki** ... **Mikkel Kessler** retained the WBA super middleweight title by stopping outgunned challenger **Danilo Haussler** in three rounds ... On the Hopkins-Pavlik show in Atlantic City, **Steven Luevano** decisioned erratic Australian **Billy Dib** over 12 rounds. Also on the show, **Marco Antonio Rubio** assured himself a shot at middleweight champion Pavlik with a decision over **Enrique Ornelas** ... British junior welterweight **Gilbert Eastman** underwent surgery to remove a clot from his brain following a knockout loss to **Sam Webb** in London ... In Tokyo, Japan, **Oscar Larios** barely retained the WBC featherweight title with a controversial decision over **Takahiro Aoh** ... Former light heavyweight and heavyweight trialhorse **Tony LaRosa** died at age 41 ... Journeyman **Cristobal Cruz** won the vacant IBF featherweight title with a 12-round decision over **Orlando Salido** in Airway Heights, Washington ... In Temecula, California, hot junior middleweight **Alfredo Angulo** stopped **Andrey Tsurkan** in the 10th round. On the same show, former Cuban amateur star **Yuriorkis Gamboa** stopped **Marcos Ramirez** in two rounds ... **Kevin Finnegan**, who fought **Marvin Hagler**, **Alan Minter**, **Tony Sibson**, and other top middleweights of the 1970s, died of heart disease in Ruslip, England. He was 60 years old ... Mexican featherweight **Daniel Aguillon** died of a head injury after being knocked out in the 12th round of his bout with **Alejandro Sanabria** in Mexico City.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## BERNARD HOPKINS

It's unusual enough when a 43-year-old fighter beats a 26-year-old one, but it's even more remarkable when the 26-year-old is an undefeated, powerpunching world champion and the 43-year-old is considered to be on his very last legs. Just as when 45-year-old George Foreman stopped 27-year-old Michael Moorer in 1994, Hopkins' win was one for both the ages and the aged and cements his status as one of the great fighters of his era and any other.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I'm tired of proving myself to the same naysayers. That motivates me. What, do I have to kill somebody?"

*—Bernard Hopkins at the press conference following his win over Kelly Pavlik*

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Vitali Klitschko, who, in his first fight in nearly four years, pitched a no-hit shutout against WBC heavyweight titleholder Sam Peter and stopped him in the ninth round.

**Loser:** Librado Andrade, who ran out of time after dropping and nearly stopping Lucian Bute in the closing seconds of their IBF super middleweight title match in Montreal, Quebec. Bute won a unanimous decision.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## BERNARD HOPKINS W 12 KELLY PAVLIK

A prizefight doesn't have to be a back-and-forth slugfest or even particularly competitive to be exciting. Hopkins' win over Pavlik was both dramatic and riveting despite Pavlik's inability to win so much as a round on most scorecards. Why? First, because it was so unexpected. Second, because we kept waiting for Hopkins to slow and for Pavlik to land the bomb. Neither happened, but that didn't make it any less fun.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

# November

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

STORY OF THE MONTH

## WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

If you weren't a big fan of Joe Calzaghe, or, if you were one of the Roy Jones die-hards, it brought the bile almost to the very top of your throat to see Calzaghe taunting a bloodied and humbled Jones late in their fight in New York, when it was clear to virtually all of the 14,152 in attendance that Jones had nothing left.

Jones fans or not, who among us thought we'd live to see the day when a fighter would stand right in Jones' punching range, leer at him, swivel his hips, slip Jones' weak, once-lightning fast left hooks and then rattle him with counterpunches?

If, however, you were among the many that never cared for Jones and his posturing and taunting, this all was kind of reassuring, a nice reminder that sometimes what goes around does indeed come around. Rounds four through 12 were payback for all the times we had to watch replays of Jones' hands-behind-the-back knockout of Glen Kelly, for the basketball and the bad rap songs and for all the times he gloated, strutted, glowered, referred to himself in the third person, missed appointments and press conferences, fought civil servants for seven-figure purses, and coasted when he should have accelerated.

Even if that's the way you felt, you could be excused for feeling melancholy watching Jones, at 39 and entirely washed-up, get his head handed to him by a guy just three years younger but a whole lifetime better.

"I feel like I can go another 12 rounds without a problem," Calzaghe said afterward, and you believed him. It had been that easy. Jones had one shining moment: A right hand caught Calzaghe's jaw and, just as he had against Bernard Hopkins, the Welshman tasted canvas in the first round. Other than that, Jones broke through with an occasional whistling right uppercut, but he was outfought in every way in which a man can be outfought and was fortunate to last to the final bell.

Afterword, Calzaghe spoke both of retiring. "I don't know if I want to do this again." he said. "I have some thinking to do," and one was forced to wonder if he had just tired of the grind after 25 years spent in rings, or if it was because he knows that sooner or later what came around for Jones will come around for him too.

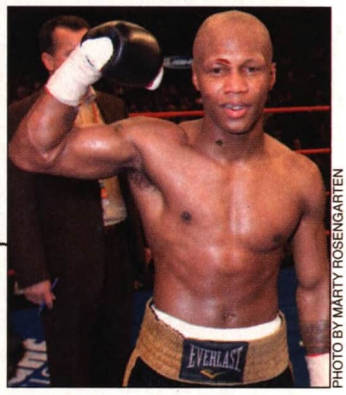



PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

*Zab Judah*

## IN OTHER NEWS

In Bamberg, Germany, **Arthur Abraham** stopped former junior middleweight titleholder **Raul Marquez** in six rounds to record his ninth defense of the IBF title ... Light heavyweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** received the Boxer of the Year award from the British Boxing Board of Control and also a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) from Queen Elizabeth II ... **Felix Sturm** retained the WBA middleweight title with a unanimous decision win over **Sebastian Sylvester** in Oberhausen, Germany ... On the same show, **Sergei Dzindziruk** decisioned American **Joel Julio** over 12 rounds ... In Tacoma, Washington, super middleweight prospect **Andre Dirrell** stopped **Victor Oganov** in the sixth round ... Former South African junior featherweight titleholder **Gaybon Yekiso** died

of a stomach disorder. He was 52 ... Junior middleweight prospect **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** convincingly decisioned journeyman **Matt Vanda** in a rematch in Las Vegas. On the same show, former flyweight titleholder **Jorge Arce** continued his campaign at bantamweight with a fourth-round kayo of overmatched **Isidro Garcia**. Also, IBF flyweight titleholder **Nonito Donaire** stopped **Moruti Mthalane** in the sixth. Later, Donaire announced that he had fired his father, who was his head trainer ... On the Calzaghe-Jones show, former welterweight champion **Zab Judah** got back in the win column with a 10-round decision over **Ernest Johnson**. On the same show, junior welterweight prospect **Dmitriy Salita** outpointed **Derrick Campos** over 12 rounds. Also, popular junior welterweight journeyman **Emanuel Augustus** dropped yet another close decision, this one to **Francisco Figueroa** over eight rounds ... Thieves broke into the **Glass City Gym** in Toledo, Ohio, and stole the ring that the gym had used since the 1970s ... Middleweight **Jonathan Taylor** was hospitalized after suffering a brain hemorrhage and stroke during a bout against **Anthony Bartinelli** in Phoenix, Arizona ... In Plymouth, Massachusetts, trainer **Charles "Babe" Wood** died of pneumonia at age 93 ... Former middleweight champion **Jermain Taylor** outpointed former super middleweight titleholder **Jeff Lacy** over 12 rounds in Nashville, Tennessee ... Veteran Las Vegas referee **Tony Gibson** committed suicide at his home. He was 61 years old.

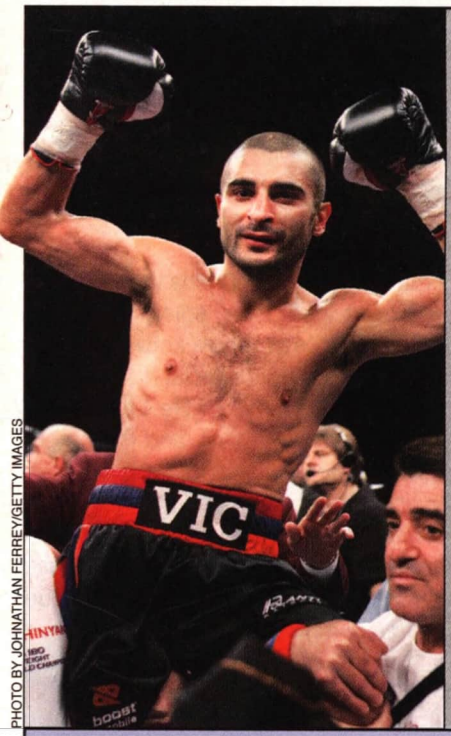



PHOTO BY JOHNATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## VIC DARCHINYAN

Going into their fight in Carson, California, Darchinyan and Cristian Mijares appeared to be going in different directions. Mijares looked better in every fight since beating Jorge Arce. Darchinyan, meanwhile, in three fights since getting pancaked by Nonito Donaire, had only looked like himself against hapless Dimitri Kirilov. So what happens? Darchinyan floors Mijares in the first and dominates before stopping him in the ninth. Outside of a few die-hards in Australia, no one believed Darchinyan would win this fight—except Darchinyan.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"They still consider me the best heavyweight out there. I'm the last great heavyweight and obviously they want me for their own selfish reasons."

*—Retired heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, commenting on why Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko are so eager to fight him*

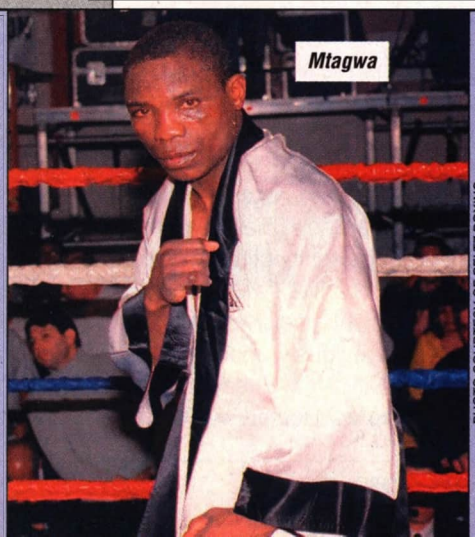
## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** David Haye, who, in his first real fight at heavyweight, dispatched useful trialhorse Monte Barrett in five wild rounds.

**Loser:** The jack-a-ninnies at Telefutura who decided to cancel the well-received and popular *Solo Boxeo* series that, coincidentally, aired a Fight of the Year candidate in Mtagwa-Villa right after the network announced that the series would not be renewed.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## ROGERS MTAGWA KO 10 TOMAS VILLA

What this one lacked in skill and star power, it made up for with brutality, heart, and high volume punching. The fighters banged on one another over the first eight rounds with neither man giving quarter. Both were hurt several times. In the ninth, a right hand bomb dropped and badly hurt Mtagwa, who, given the beating he then took, was lucky to make it out of the round. He could barely stand in the 10th but he landed a right hand bomb of his own that floored Villa and two more knockdowns ended the bout. It was mesmerizing.

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# December

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STORY OF THE MONTH

## A GOOD LITTLE MAN

In the end it wasn't about the $70-million in revenue the fight did, or the 1.25 million pay-per-view buys. That was all good news for the fight game and made a lot of money for a few lucky souls, but Manny Pacquiao's easy win over Oscar De La Hoya largely turned out to be about reinforcing one of the absolute tenants of pugilism, which says great size is not enough, that skill and speed and earnestness of heart will overcome size most days of the week.

The over-arching angle going into De La Hoya's second try at showing that the world's best-known fighter can stay with its best fighter was the size difference, which many respected, knowledgeable fight figures saw as all-important. This despite the reams of evidence to the contrary existent in the sport's long history. Fighters not as good or smart or dedicated or as fast as Pacquiao have overcome greater physical disadvantages than he did against De La Hoya, who did his part for Pacquiao by training and dieting to the point that he actually walked into the ring the lighter man.

He could not have known then that he was in for the beating of a lifetime, that Pacquiao's remarkable speed and perfectly executed game plan, which principally involved always moving to De La Hoya's right and thus negating his left jab, would convince De La Hoya to stay on his stool after the eighth round. And De La Hoya should feel no shame about that. Few men in the history of the world who have as much money as De La Hoya does have willingly taken as much punishment.

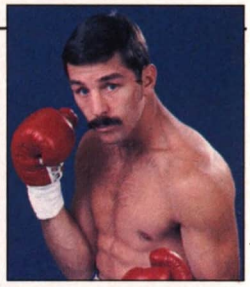
It was easy to get wrapped up in the drama that was De La Hoya's likely final showing at a world-class level and to wonder what effect his departure would have on the business end of boxing. But that would be a disservice to Pacquiao, who, with the win, established himself as one of the great fighters from Asia and almost certainly eclipsed the accomplishments of Flash Elorde, the other very great Filipino fighter.

It's hard to say how many of the 15,000-plus that crowded the MGM Grand in Las Vegas were there solely to root for De La Hoya, but all in attendance must have known midway through that they were seeing someone special in Pacquiao, and many for the first time. The magic of De La Hoya is his ability to bring casual fans into the tent, and Pacquiao, outside the Philippines, has been mostly a phenomena of the hardcore. With fights against Ricky Hatton and possibly Floyd Mayweather down the road, that is certain to change.

On this night, the magic all belonged to "Pac-Man," whose gifts frequently involve reminding us what is good and true about this business. Few have done it better.

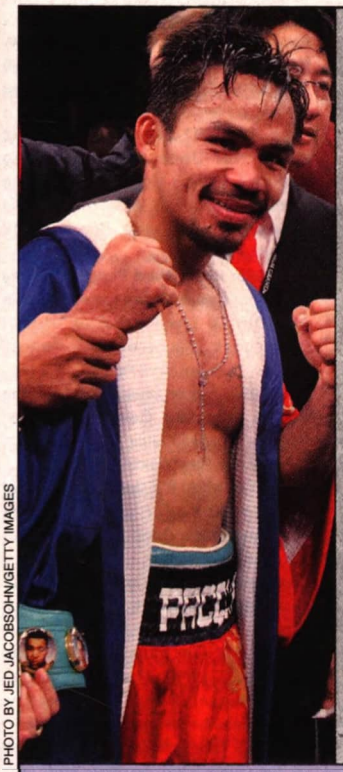
## IN OTHER NEWS

**Wladimir Klitschko** retained the IBF heavyweight title with a seventh-round knockout of former champion **Hasim Rahman** in Manheim, Germany. On the same show, 41-year-old former heavyweight champion **Riddick Bowe**, fighting for the first time in 3½ years, won an eight-round decision over **Gene Pukall** ... Two-time former featherweight titleholder **Robert Guerrero** won his arbitration case against longtime promoter **Dan Goossen**, and promptly signed a contract with Golden Boy Promotions ... Junior welterweight contender **Kendall Holt** won a 12-round split decision over previously unbeaten late-sub **Demetrius Hopkins** in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Hopkins was filling in for **Ricardo Torres**, who was forced to withdraw from his rubber bout with Holt because of illness. On the same show, middleweight **Yuri Foreman** outpointed **James Moore** over 10 rounds ... **Orlando Canizales**, **Lennox Lewis**, **Brian Mitchell**, and HBO's **Larry Merchant** were among those elected into the International Boxing Hall of Fame ... In Cabazon, California, former multi-division titleholder **James Toney** won an unpopular 12-round decision over **Fres Oquendo** in a heavyweight bout. On the same card, super middleweight prospect **Andre Ward** stopped **Esteban Camou** in three. Also, heavyweight prospects **Eddie Chambers** and **Malik Scott**



*Brian Mitchell*

won eight-round decisions over **Cisse Salif** and **Rafael Butler**, respectively ... Readers of Germany's *BoxSport* magazine voted middleweight beltholder Arthur Abraham Boxer of the Year for the third year in a row ... In a non-title bout in Managua, Nicaragua, WBA strawweight beltholder **Roman Gonzalez** stopped **Miguel Tellez** after two rounds ... Former South African lightweight champion **Simphiwe Joni** was stabbed to death in East London ... In Los Angeles, California, **Urbano Antillon** kayoed **Juan Ramon Cruz** in four rounds. On the same card, former flyweight titleholder **Brian Viloria** blew out **Benji Garcia** in two ... In Newark, New Jersey, IBF bantamweight beltholder **Joseph Agbeko** won a hard-fought 12-round majority decision over **William Gonzalez**. On the same show, hot junior welterweight prospect **Devon Alexander** knocked out **Chris Fernandez** in three ... In a heavyweight slugfest in Ontario, California, heavyweight **Chris Arreloa** climbed off the canvas to stop **Travis Walker** in the third round. On the same card, **Paul Williams** stopped former junior middleweight titleholder **Verno Phillips** in eight ... IBF strawweight titleholder **Raul Garcia** decisioned **Jose Luis Varela** in Loreto, Mexico.



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## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH
## MANNY PACQUIAO

As is often the case with Pacquiao, it is not just that he wins; it is how he wins. It would have been enough just for him to beat De La Hoya, given what many believed was the tremendous size advantage De La Hoya would have. But he didn't just get by De La Hoya or even beat him soundly. He annihilated him. He outboxed him and overwhelmed him, suffering barely a scratch, which is quite something, given his propensity for cutting. Pacquiao fought the perfect fight on the biggest stage on which he'd ever appeared and never looked stronger, faster, or more confident. This is one hell of a prizefighter.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"There is too much politics in boxing. Too many belts and too many champions, which dilutes real champions like myself. There are four world champions in each division and it's bad because there are no stars anymore. It's a big problem."

*—Light heavyweight champion and former long-time WBO beltholder Joe Calzaghe, speaking to the Associated Press about the state of boxing*

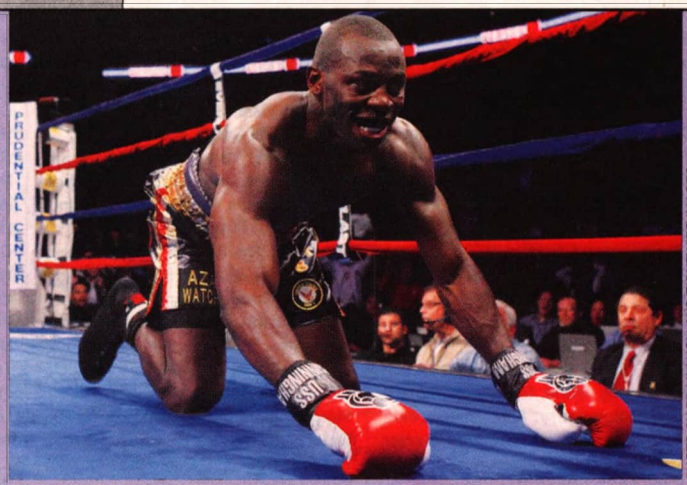
## WINNERS AND LOSERS

**Winner:** Manny Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, who pushed for the fight (once he was convinced of its viability), devised the perfect strategy for victory, got under De La Hoya's skin, and even more or less correctly picked the round in which Pacquiao would win.

**Loser**: Shane Mosley, whose grand jury testimony in 2003, during which he admitted to injecting himself with the doping agent EPO prior to his second fight with Oscar De La Hoya, was released to the press.

## FIGHT OF THE MONTH
## TOMASZ ADAMEK W 12 STEVE CUNNINGHAM

In just about every moment that he wasn't getting dropped in this slam-bang affair in Newark, New Jersey (and broadcast live on Versus, bless their hearts), Cunningham was hammering Adamek with accurate, fast, if not terribly powerful, punches. He seemed on the verge of dropping Adamek at least twice, but, well, it's good to be a puncher. Three times Adamek made Cunningham eat canvas and that was good enough to get him the split decision win. Let's hope we see these two together again.

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**March 1985: Thomas Hearns—Fighter Of The Year.** Plus: Annual ratings, Fight, Upset, Round, Comeback, and Prospect of the Year.

**June 1985: Holmes' Last Hurrah? Holmes-Bey Color Action.** Plus: Holmes vs. all-time greats, Paul-Arroyo, 1901.

**Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale).** Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

**Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again.** Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

**Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast?** Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

**Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds.** Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

**Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion.** Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

**May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast.** Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

**June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene.** Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

**Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet?** Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

**Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win?** Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

**Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry.** Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

**June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony?** Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

**July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die.** Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

**Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future?** Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

**Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys.** Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

**Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby?** Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

**Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide.** Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

**March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History."** Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

**April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year.** Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

**May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson."** Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

**Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again!** Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

**Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory?** Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

**Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!"** Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

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**July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield.** Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

**Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay!** Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

**June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez.** Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

**July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be ... But It's Not Gonna Matter.** Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

**Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color).** Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

**July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot?** Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

**Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There."** Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

**Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion?** Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

**May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?*** Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, The Ring Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

**Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last.** Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

**Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show.** Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

**Feb. 1998: Welter-Skelter! The Hottest Division In Boxing.** Plus: Lewis-Golota, Olympic update, Art Shires, boxing I.Q.

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**Aug. 1998: Lennox Lewis: No Holyfield, No Glory.** Plus: Felix Trinidad, Pat & Mike McMurtry, Chris Byrd, unbreakable records, contenders & pretenders.

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**June 2002: Lennox Lewis: I'll End The Tyson "Freak Show!"** Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Freitas-Casamayor, De La Hoya & Vargas, Hagler & Leonard.

**Aug. 2002: Lewis vs. Tyson: Who Will Win ... And What Happens Next.** Plus: Michael Moorer, Jeff Fenech, Charley Parham, Rafael & Juan Manuel Marquez.

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Feb. 2005 (100-Page Extra): The Incredible Comeback Of Felix Trinidad—Just The Boost Boxing Needs! **Also: Glen Johnson, Klitschko-Williams preview, Kasim Ouma, Tony Lopez, Paul Berlenbach, bodypunching.**

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# NO LONGER JUST A FACE IN THE CROWD

## Juan Manuel Lopez Emerges As The Heir To Trinidad

*In his most recent fight, Lopez blew away Sergio Manuel Medina in the first round of a bout featured on the high-profile Manny Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya pay-per-view card in Las Vegas. But despite the fact it was "Juanma's" third straight, first-round knockout, nobody, least of all Lopez, was happy with Medina's lack of effort.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

By Joseph Santoliquito

Walking around in public in his native Puerto Rico, Juan Manuel Lopez used to get a lot of curious looks. He seemed familiar, but people couldn't exactly pinpoint who he was or where they'd seen him before. Some folks had a rough idea who he was, but few were bold enough to approach him and ask, "Hey, aren't you that fighter I just saw knock out someone? Could I take a picture with you."

Funny what a difference 12 months, six rounds, and 13 minutes and 1 second of fighting can do.

These days, the junior featherweight is so recognizable throughout Puerto Rico that he has to make special plans each time he steps out. Hour-long shopping sprees have morphed into three- and four-hour excursions. He can't move through a mall without being besieged by autograph-seekers and camera phones. His three-year-old son, Juan Manuel Jr., is even in demand, oftentimes grabbing the center of attention from his blushing, smiling father.

That's what happens when you carry lightning in your fists and you're arguably the best young fighter in the world. It's what happens when it seems your mere presence is powerful enough that the guy across the ring folds without putting up much of a fight. It's what happens when you're considered an icon-in-waiting.

Yes, many are starting to believe it is Lopez, not Miguel Cotto, who will replace Felix Trinidad in the hearts of Puerto Rican boxing fans. Can Lopez, like future Hall of Famer Trinidad, stop activity in Puerto Rico each time he fights, much like the way Manny Pacquiao shuts down the Philippines today?

Southpaw Lopez bulled his way through 2008, winning four times and needing only six rounds to do it—including three consecutive, first-round stoppages. His all-action style, and one-punch power, has swelled his fan base—and his home base. In late-December Lopez purchased a two-story, four-bedroom home with a swimming pool and spacious living room in a lavish gated community.

The new home is tangible proof that Lopez has become a star, at least back home in Puerto Rico. His life made a dramatic turn when he stopped knockout artist Daniel Ponce De Leon in the first round last June, garnering a minor title. The rapid change has been almost beyond his comprehension.

World meet Juan Manuel Lopez. "Juanma," meet the world.

"This has all been a little shock to me," Lopez said through translator Ricardo Jimenez of Top Rank. "After I came back from beating De Leon, people were walking up to me wanting to take my picture. I've learned now every time I go out in public, I better be patient and not expect to get things done real quick."

Just before leaving for Las Vegas for his fight with Sergio Manuel Medina, on the undercard of the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya fight in early-December, Lopez began feeling eyes on him whenever he went out in public. A good example was a preflight trip to a shopping center. He was there with his family, including little Juan Manuel Jr., and as he walked in, he found himself talking to ... himself!

Lopez kept walking and talking, but soon discovered that there was nobody behind him. Where did his family go? He looked back and saw that they never got past the doorway of the shopping center. Fans had surrounded his wife, Barbara, and their son, wanting pictures with *them*.

"I found out there was a big story about my family in one of the local papers, and they had pictures of us in there, but I didn't know that when we left that morning to go shopping for clothes," Juanma said, laughing. "I knew there were fans out there who might have known me, but they knew my wife and kids too! Juan Manuel Jr. is always with me, and it's come to a

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

***Lopez' kayo streak, rapidly growing popularity, and outgoing personality have a lot of fans and boxing insiders comparing him to Felix Trinidad (right). Unless there is a heretofore-undiscovered flaw in his fighting makeup, Lopez has an excellent chance of fulfilling those expectations.***

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

*A familiar sight: Most of Lopez' fights end with his opponent sprawled out on the canvas and the referee directing Juanma to a neutral corner, as was the case with Jose Carlos Caro (above) and Juan Brea (below), who went out in third and first rounds, respectively.*

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*It was Lopez' first-round knockout of Daniel Ponce De Leon in May 2008 that rocketed him to fame back home in Puerto Rico. The bomb-throwing Mexican was considered a dangerous assignment, but Lopez' heavy artillery prevailed in spectacular fashion.*

point where people want to take a picture with my son—and not with me. But we did buy clothes that day. It just took me a long time to do it."

His meteoric rise has been eye-blink quick, though this upward curve hasn't been without its divots and downslides. Lopez, 24-0 (22), had to absorb some valuable lessons during his ascension.

One that comes significantly to mind was Lopez' 10th-round stoppage of Hugo Dianzo, on August 4, 2007, on the undercard of the Erik Morales-David Diaz fight at the Allstate Arena, in Rosemont, Illinois.

Lopez won, but looked sluggish doing it. Something, for some reason, didn't look and feel quite right about him that night.

After each fight, Team Lopez gathers to discuss what happened in the ring. The meeting usually includes Peter Rivera, who co-promotes Lopez with Top Rank. Rivera was far from pleased with what he saw against Dianzo, and let Lopez know it.

"Peter really let him have it," recalled Bruce Trampler, Top Rank's matchmaker. "It was an agonizing, boring 10-round fight. Everyone was booing. It was a fight where one guy couldn't hurt the other, and one fighter wouldn't. All the rest of us were disgusted, and Juan Manuel realized that he had to work harder and step up the pace.

"What we've seen ever since then is the real Juanma. We knew there was talent there, it was just a matter of coming out, and it certainly has to come out more. But Juan Manuel was fighting at three-quarters speed. Some fighters tell you they don't hear the cheers and the boos. Well, he heard the boos that night—and then some. Dianzo wasn't his first stinker, but it probably will be his last."

Rivera confronted Lopez about letting his fans, his family, and, most importantly, himself down.

"You have some fighters who run hot-and-cold, and Juanma was definitely running cold against Dianzo," Rivera said. "It was part of his development that happened. We talked to Juanma and told him he has to be the same fighter all of the time. We stressed that if he didn't make that change, we'd never get to the next level."

Lopez had become intoxicated with his punching power. He was trying to knock out everyone he faced, and do it quickly. When those knockouts didn't readily come within the first few rounds, he grew frustrated and lethargic. It forced him out of his rhythm and limited his considerable boxing skills. He resorted to throwing bombs, instead of breaking down his foes with his jab and wide array of punches.

It's his well-rounded skill set that makes Lopez so special. Besides his charismatic disposition, his arsenal goes beyond a powerful right hook

and bludgeoning straight left. He's a technician too.

Rich Marotta, Fox Sports' ringside analyst, has seen Lopez fight five times, including his three-round demolition of Jonathan Oquendo in February '08, and one-round destruction of Cesar Figueroa in October.

"Juanma sets up opponents with boxing skills, and then hits them in such a fashion with clean, effective power-punches that whoever he faces can't recover," Marotta said. "He's such a great finisher that any recovery efforts are almost impossible. I don't know anyone off hand who Lopez reminds me of, but maybe if you turned Salvador Sanchez around and made him left-handed, maybe him. I really think that much of Lopez that I put him on that level. He's a guy with real skills and a big-time punch. I think he is a very special fighter and the next superstar in boxing."

Defining Lopez, who's still a work in progress, will also depend on who Top Rank and Rivera puts in the ring with him. One thing is for certain: Team Lopez doesn't want to see any more fighters like Sergio Medina.

Medina, 33-2 (18), was supposed to battle Lopez, bring out a dimension in the undefeated sensation that we've yet to see. Instead, the fight turned into an embarrassing joke.

Lopez knocked down Medina three times before referee Joe Cortez mercifully stopped it at the 1:38 mark of the opening round. Medina didn't seem as if he wanted to fight. It was so easy, Juanma even shrugged after one of the knockdowns, baffled as to why this Argentine with the glistening record wasn't putting up any resistance.

"We were wondering the same thing," Trampler said. "All great fighters have to be defined by the opposition they face. But we don't need any more Sergio Medinas out there. It was a waste of our time and Juanma's time. We were looking for a guy to extend Lopez, let fans see him in a fight. Instead, we got that."

Back in the locker room afterward, it was vintage Lopez. The conscientious 25-year-old who parades with his emotions openly on display apologized to Trampler, Rivera, and Top Rank. He would have apologized to the whole of Puerto Rico if he had a bullhorn strong enough.

"I felt so bad for putting this together, I apologized to *him*," Trampler said. "The Medina fight wasn't what he trained for and what he expected. Lopez is not looking for handouts or stiffs. He apologized and genuinely felt bad, but it wasn't his fault Medina didn't want to fight."

To make matters worse, the fiasco continued after the fight was over. Medina claimed that he received death threats forcing him to throw the fight, and that those threats were from "the organization and my rival."

The allegation struck Lopez harder than any weak attempt made by Medina inside the ring. Fortunately, Medina recanted his statements a week later and admitted he lied.

"When I got into the ring, Medina looked very confident to me and I thought I had to jump on him, I had to take that confidence from him," Lopez said. "Once I got him, I took all of his confidence away. I knew he was mine from that moment on. But what he said after, it was a lack of respect for me and anyone associated with boxing. Saying something like that wasn't true. He said he lied, and I knew I did my job."

What's out there for Lopez at 122 is anyone's guess. THE RING junior featherweight world champion Israel Vazquez and arch-rival Rafael Marquez would like to renew their incredible rivalry in 2009, that's if Vazquez' eye injury heals properly. There's also 5'11" junior feather praying mantis Celestino Caballero hovering around the top of the rankings.

"I hope to have a big year defending [the WBO belt]," Lopez said. "The fight I want, the fight I'm looking forward to is against Israel Vazquez, to unify titles. That's the most important to me, to prove that I'm the best."

After stopping Figueroa last October in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, Lopez was congratulated by Trinidad. The two hugged, then mugged for postfight pictures, but it almost appeared as if an informal ceremony was occurring.

"My idol has always been Tito Trinidad, and one day I'd like to be like him," Lopez said. "Trinidad told me he loves the way I knock out guys and that's the way he used to do it. I consider Tito a good friend. I carry myself just like Tito carries himself and how he is with the people and the fans. That's the way I want to be." ■

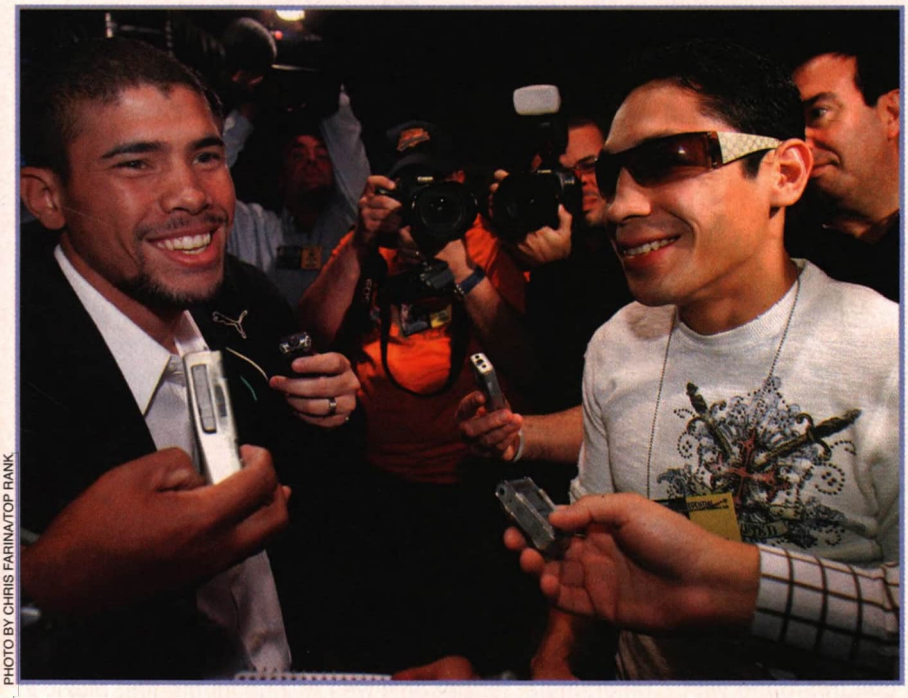


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

***Lopez and the man he wants to fight more than anybody else, world 122-pound champion Israel Vazquez, enjoy a meet and greet with the media in Las Vegas. If the fight happens, it would be another glorious chapter in the Puerto Rico vs. Mexico rivalry that is always guaranteed to provide great action.***

# BABY AND THE BABES

## Arizmendi's Wild Life In The Ring And Beyond

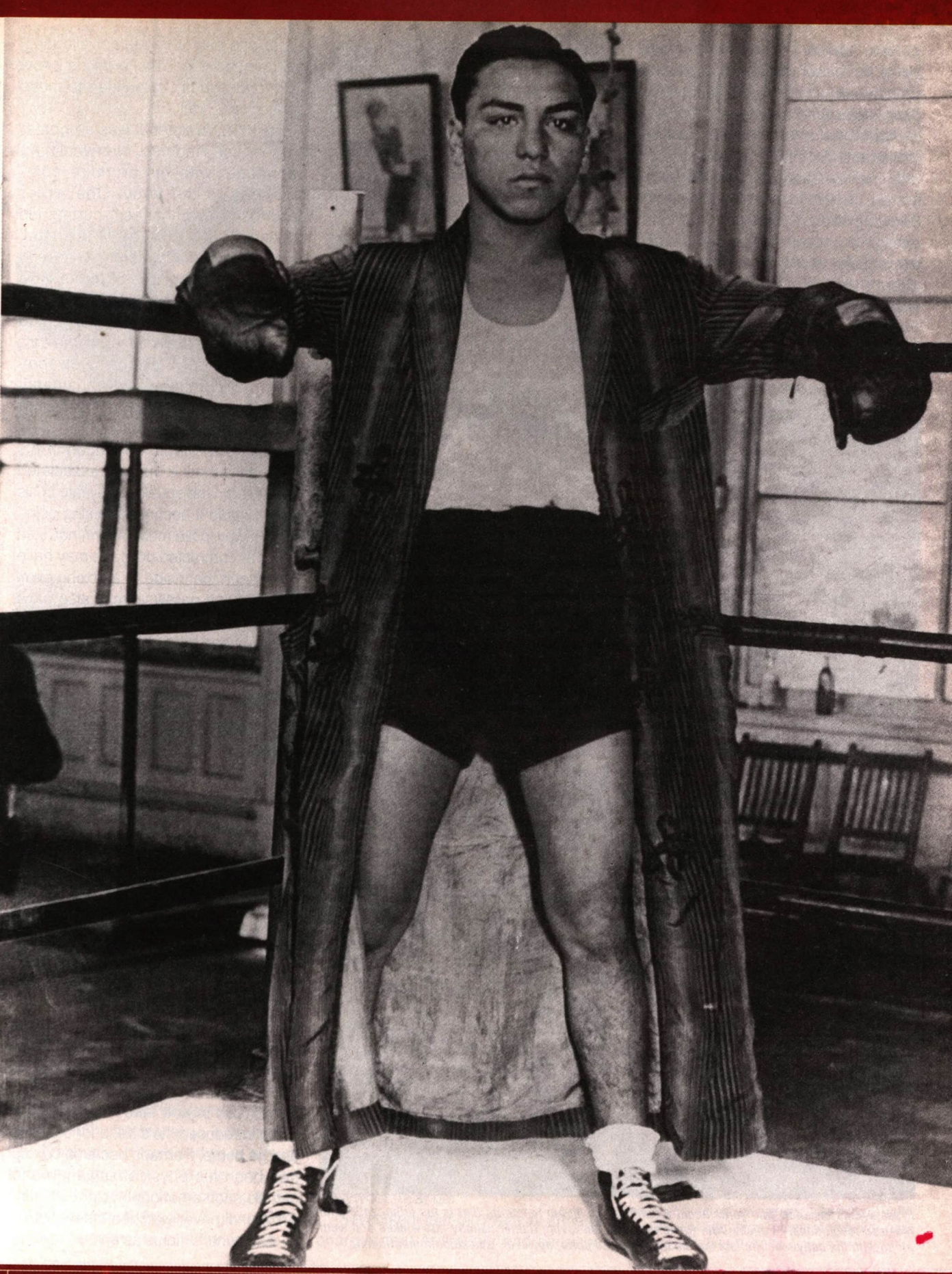
By Don Stradley

During the 1930s, fight fans in Los Angeles swooned over a gallant, boyish featherweight out of Mexico known as Alberto "Baby" Arizmendi. His colorful fan base was a who's who of Tinseltown, including Clark Gable, the Marx Brothers, Humphrey Bogart, and, according to one United Press story, Mae West, whose "ample bosom rested on the bottom rope at the Hollywood Legion Stadium every Friday night."

But Arizmendi's popularity went beyond the Hollywood crowd. *The Oakland Tribune*'s Gene Vinassa once wrote: "To the Mexican kids of Los Angeles, the name Arizmendi will always be revered. For when the Baby hit the big bracket in boxing he would toss his dough around with all the kids and buy them candy, ice cream, etc. They loved him."

Being so closely associated with Los Angeles was both an advantage and a detriment to Arizmendi. On one hand, he left an indelible impression on those who saw him. Nonagenarian author Budd Schulberg wrote in recent years, "I have only to shut my eyes and put my mind into rewind to watch the nonpareil Henry Armstrong in with one of my all-time favorites, the inscrutable Baby Arizmendi. They had similar styles, in close without clinching, nonstop attack from two resolute little bulls."

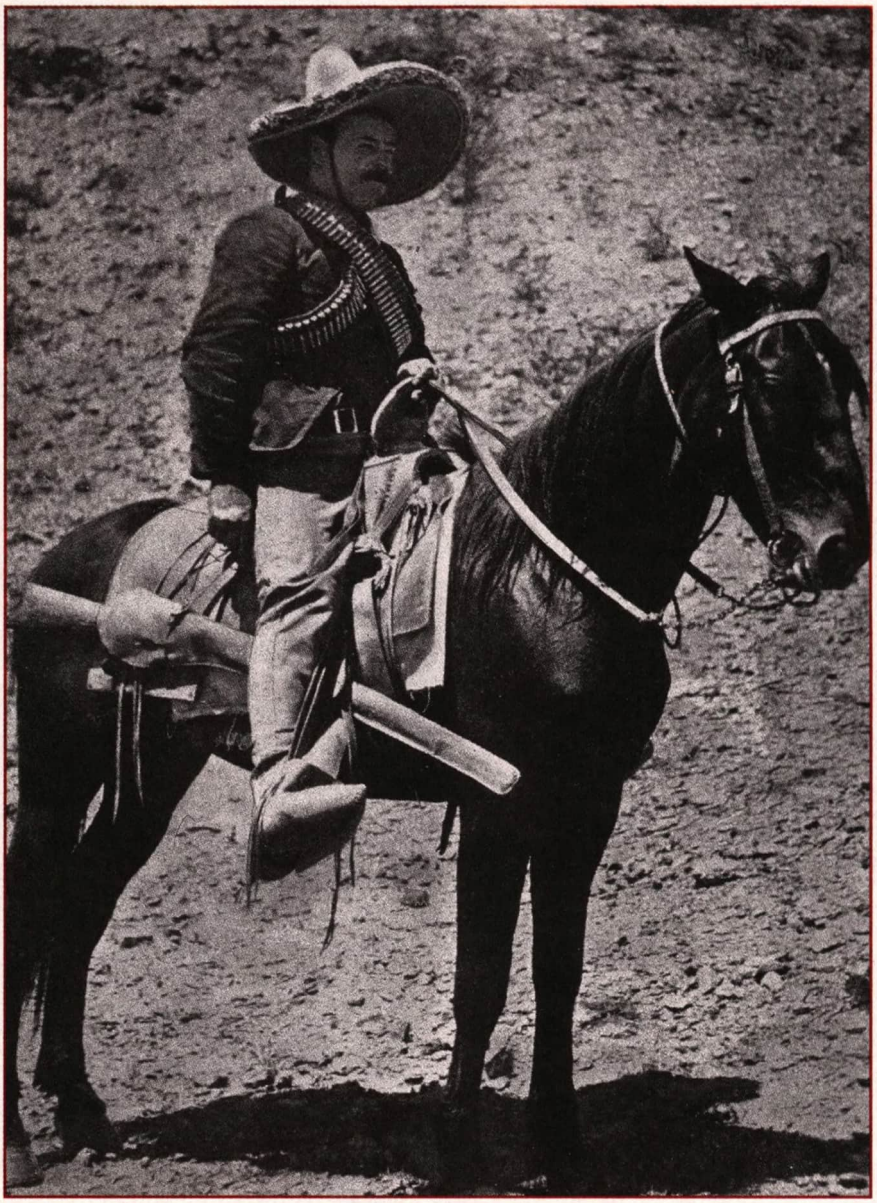
On the other hand, the self-appointed caretakers of the game in New York rarely gave Arizmendi the ink he deserved, despite his blood-spattered record of 77-29-16 (13). This is unfortunate, for not only was Arizmendi the first Mexican fighter to win a championship, he also won a childhood bout with polio.



Born March 17, 1913 (some say 1914), in Torreon, Coahuila, Arizmendi soon moved with his family to Tampico, Tamaulipas. One afternoon when Arizmendi was six, he collapsed in front of his family's home. He was stricken with infantile paralysis, and his family feared he would never walk again. Showing remarkable determination, Arizmendi underwent rigorous therapy that included visits to a local boxing gym, where shadowboxing was prescribed to strengthen his arms and legs.

Arizmendi loved the sport, and was soon testing himself against other boys and even adults. Boxing cured him, he would later say, so fighting was both a pleasure and an honor.

Arizmendi's right hand remained partially paralyzed (perhaps accounting for his lack of a knockout punch), but by age 10 he was fighting for money, earning the nickname "The Little General" and giggling as customers showered him with coins. Press agents played fast and loose with this aspect of Arizmendi's past, estimating that he'd had over 300 fights during his prepubescent years. They also marketed him as the happy-go-lucky son of a Mexican bandit, his father allegedly having served in Pancho Villa's army. Arizmendi usually responded to these stories with a wink.



*Press agents invented wild yarns about Arizmendi, including the claim that is his father rode with Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa (pictured). The fun-loving fighter usually just winked and went along with the ballyhoo. The fact that he had survived polio, however, was seldom mentioned.*

By 1932, Arizmendi was a popular draw in Los Angeles, overwhelming opponents with his drumfire combinations to the body. One writer described Arizmendi as "spurting his punches like skyrockets." Arizmendi also possessed a wondrous chin—the boy who once collapsed in his yard would not be knocked off his feet in over 100 professional bouts. After beating some of the best small men of the day, including Fidel LaBarba, Newsboy Brown, and Tommy Paul, Arizmendi was recognized as the California featherweight champion.

There was rarely a mention of his polio. It was still a disease associated with poverty and squalor. Only late in his career would it become a talking point. But in a way, polio made Arizmendi. Had he never contracted polio, he may have never seen the inside of a boxing gym. Experiencing paralysis may also have been responsible for his breakneck style. Anyone who ever saw him fight, his hands pumping like pistons, would agree that Arizmendi fought as if to stop moving was to stop living.

But if polio wasn't deemed a suitable subject, the press never tired of linking Arizmendi with various Hollywood types. One of his admirers was Lupe Velez, the Mexican spitfire best known for leaving scratch marks on Johnny Weissmuller's back. Like Arizmendi, Velez had left Mexico to make her mark in Hollywood. She was Arizmendi's most ardent fan, often rushing to ringside to give him a good-luck smooch.

Arizmendi could be eccentric. On nights when he wasn't fighting, promoters would invite him to sit ringside so he could be introduced. Rather than sit through the prelims, he'd wait outside until the main event. When a friend signaled it was time, Arizmendi would rush in and take his seat. After being introduced, he'd head for the exits and go home. Perhaps because boxing had been his physical salvation and carried such emotional weight for him, Arizmendi never watched others fight.

Arizmendi's status as an L.A. favorite

*Arizmendi's biggest fan was glamorous Mexican actress Lupe Velez, who not only attended his fights, but also frequently gave him a good-luck kiss prior to the start of his bouts.*

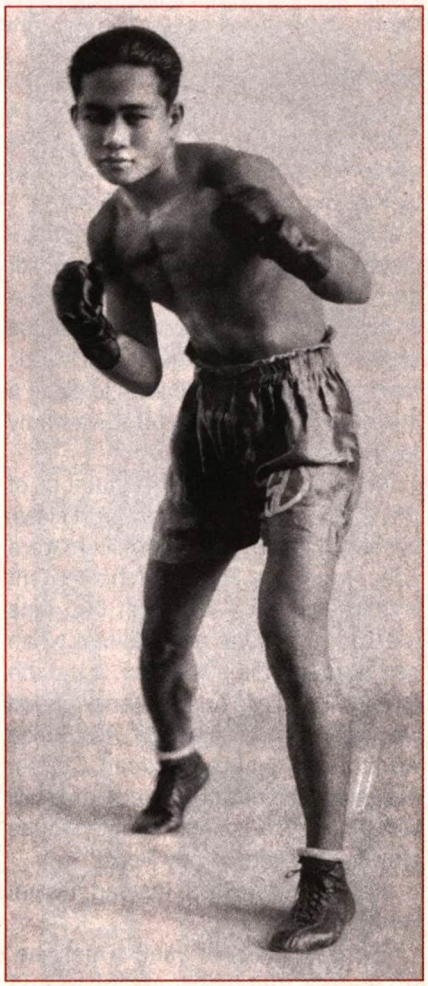
grew after a three-bout series with clever Filipino star Speedy Dado. After splitting the first two bouts, a rubber match was made for January '33. Arizmendi was a few ounces over the weight limit, but was saved by his manager, Bert Morse, who grabbed a scissors and gave him an impromptu haircut to make weight. The trim must've worked, for according to the Associated Press, Arizmendi gave Dado "a severe beating" to earn the decision.

Next for Arizmendi was a shot at NBA featherweight titlist Freddie Miller. Arizmendi dropped a 10-round decision. A month later he lost to Young Tommy, a fighter he'd previously beaten. If it seemed Arizmendi wasn't himself, it may have been because he'd found himself involved in an old-fashioned Hollywood scandal.

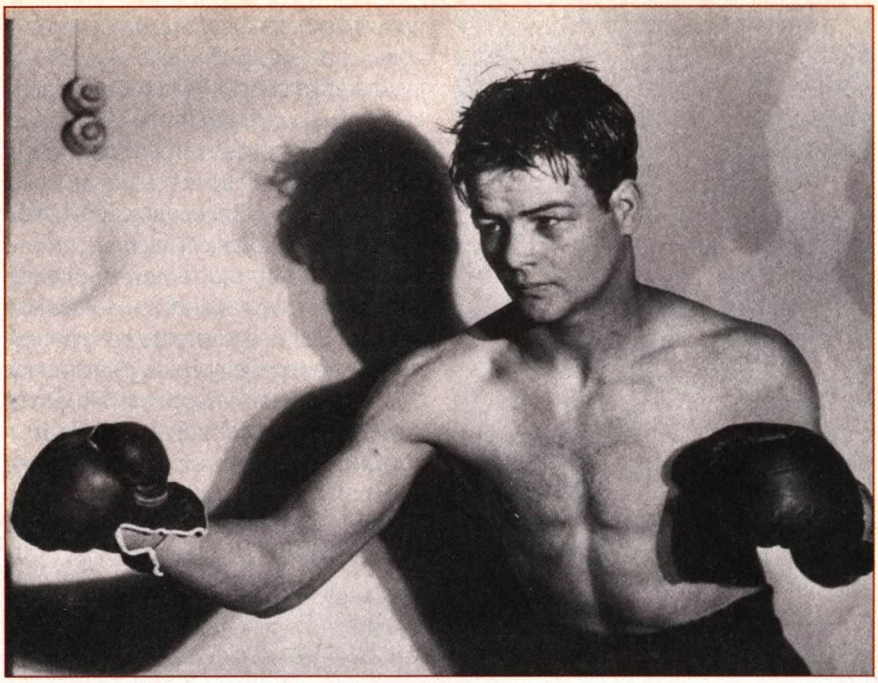
Seventeen-year-old Frances Armena charged that Arizmendi had seduced her with a promise of marriage, leaving her with an infant son. This news broke just as Arizmendi and his real girlfriend, Henrietta, were planning their own wedding. Deemed an "undesirable alien," Arizmendi spent several weeks petitioning the U.S. Department of Labor for permission to enter America.

By that summer Arizmendi was back in L.A., married to Henrietta, and under the guidance of a feisty new manager, Cal Working. Arizmendi seemed reborn, whipping Miller in a non-title rematch. Sadly, another personal setback was on the horizon—Arizmendi's younger brother, Juan, had followed him into boxing, only to die of injuries after being kayoed in his pro debut.

Arizmendi's helter-skelter career continued. After losing a decision to Tony Canzoneri, he made a rare trip east to



*Much of Arizmendi's early popularity was the result of a series of action-packed fights with Filipino Speedy Dado, whom Arizmendi beat twice in a thrilling trilogy.*



*National Boxing Association featherweight titleholder Freddie Miller beat Arizmendi in a February 1933 title bout, but lost the rematch later that year. Unfortunately for Arizmendi, it was a non-title bout.*

beat Al Roth at Madison Square Garden, putting himself in line to face "The Bronx Spider," Mike Belloise, for the New York version of the featherweight title vacated by Kid Chocolate.

On August 30, 1934, Arizmendi dominated Belloise, dropping him in the ninth and cutting him in the 10th. Referee Arthur Donovan and two ringside judges scored 11 of the 15 rounds for Arizmendi, making him the first Mexican to claim a major boxing title, even if it was only recognized in New York.

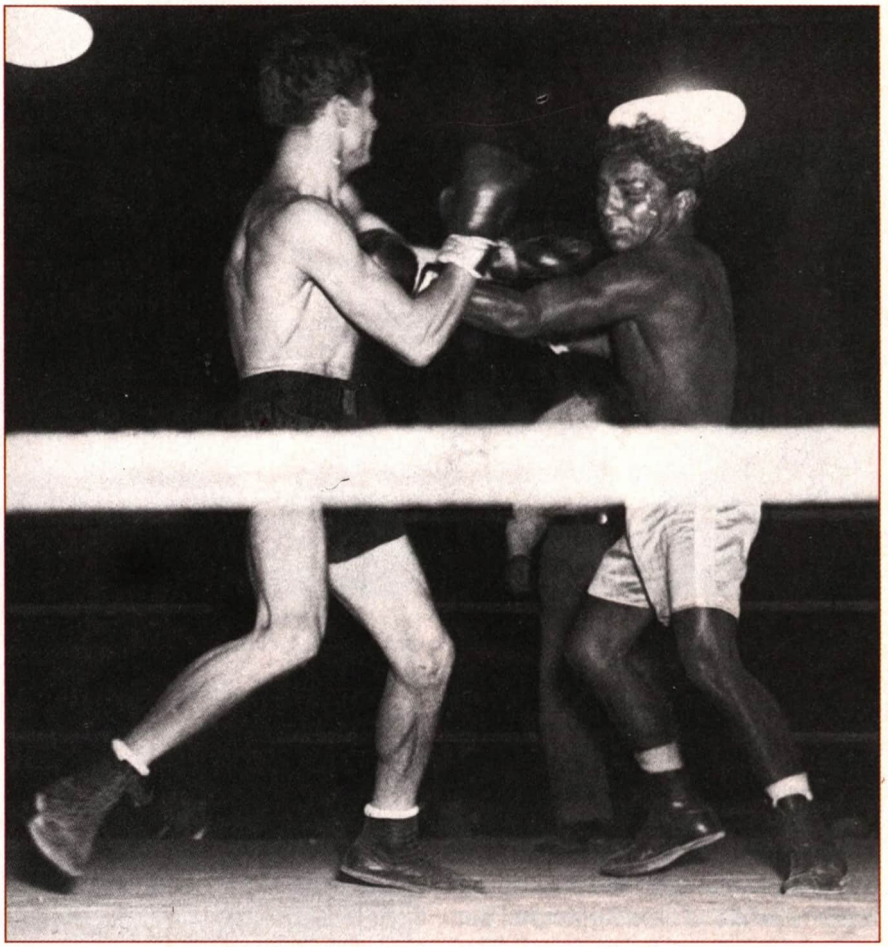
Many griped about the number of title claimants in the featherweight class, but as far as Arizmendi's admirers were concerned, the Baby's achievement was monumental. Nearly 1,000 fans greeted him at the train station when he returned to Los Angeles. A parade through the city's Latin Quarter ended with a celebration dance at L.A.'s Shrine Auditorium, where Mexican Consul Alejandro Martinez presented Arizmendi with a medal. Arizmendi shouted to the crowd, "Bring on Barney Ross!"

He didn't get Ross. Instead, he got Henry Armstrong.

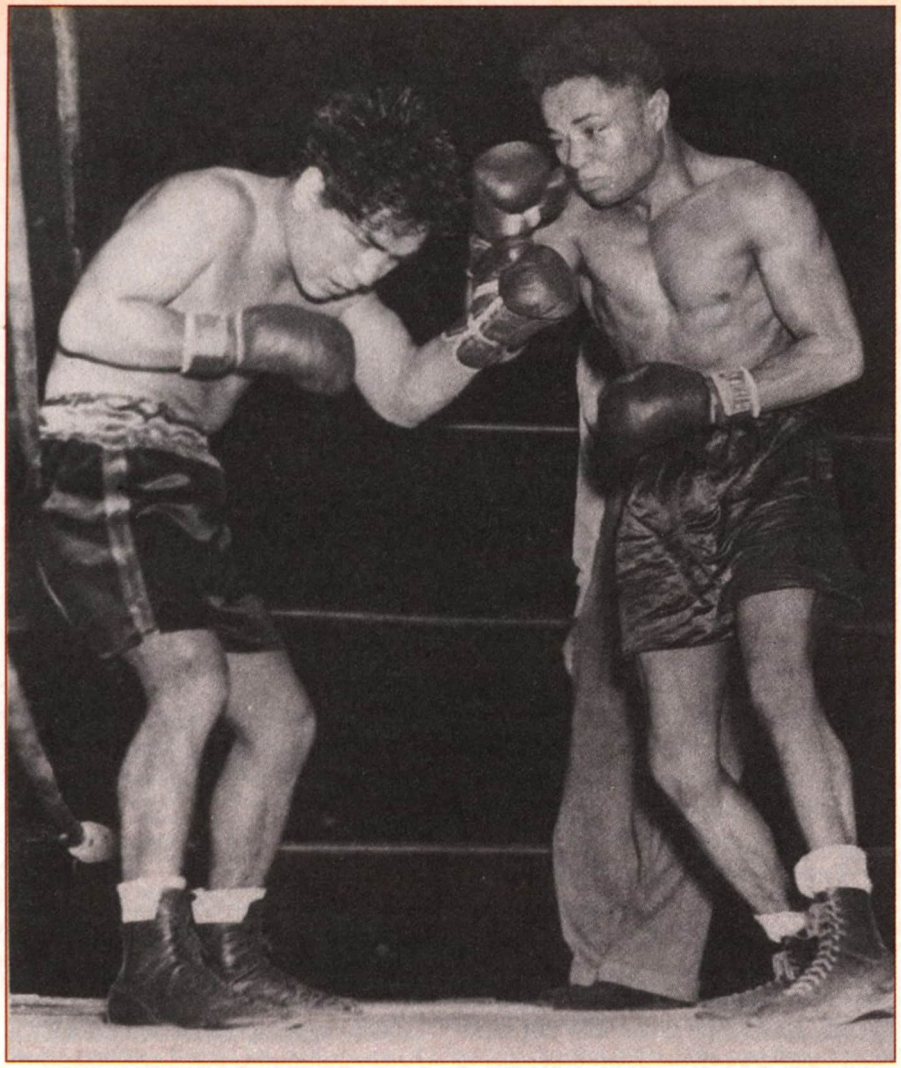
Eight weeks after beating Belloise, Arizmendi fought "Homicide Hank" in Mexico City's National Arena. After suffering a broken left wrist in the second round, Arizmendi counterpunched his way to a 10-round decision. In 1970, Armstrong told author Peter Heller that he'd carried Arizmendi. Accounts of the fight, however, describe Armstrong fouling Arizmendi repeatedly, which didn't endear him to the Mexican fans.

"After the fight, police escorted [Armstrong] to the dressing room to make sure there would be no demonstrations from the angry crowd," the United Press reported.

The rematch took place in a Mexico City bullring on New Year's Day, 1935. A crowd of 20,000 watched Arizmendi dazzle Armstrong for the first six frames. Then, after Armstrong had demolished Arizmendi's right eye in the seventh, they watched in awe as Arizmendi fought savagely to win on points. Armstrong later told Heller that he'd been ordered to throw the fight, but during the middle rounds his manager told him to try for a knockout.



*Arizmendi mixes it up with Mike Belloise in a 1934 bout for the New York State Athletic Commission's version of the featherweight title. The 15-round victory over "The Bronx Spider" made Arizmendi the first Mexican to win a major title.*



*Arizmendi went 2-3 in five fights with Henry Armstrong. In their second bout, Arizmendi won a 12-round decision, adding both the Mexican and California version of the 126-pound title to his resume.*

Of course, there's the possibility that Armstrong was truthful, but like most fighters, Armstrong enjoyed embellishment. Still, Armstrong gave Baby his due. In one interview, Armstrong ranked Arizmendi alongside Barney Ross for shear toughness. "His neck and head was as big as a heavyweight," Armstrong said. "I never could knock him out. You couldn't hurt him."

Beating Armstrong strengthened Arizmendi's claim to the championship; he was now recognized in California, New York, and Mexico. Unfortunately, his struggles with weight, combined with a reluctance to leave California, prompted the New York commission to withdraw recognition of him and declare their title vacant once again.

In August 1936, Armstrong pounded Arizmendi to win a 10-round decision in L.A.'s Wrigley Field. The fourth meeting took place seven months later. The decision again went Armstrong's way, but many ringsiders thought Arizmendi deserved the win. Their fifth encounter, fought in 1939 for Armstrong's welterweight title, saw both men bleeding like butchered hogs. After 10 rounds of monotonous mauling, Armstrong beat Arizmendi a third time in a bout the AP called "close but decisive."

Armstrong wasn't Arizmendi's only opponent in those days. Baby won four out of five over another popular L.A. pug, Wally Hally, and notched two over the legendary Chalky Wright. Arizmendi had less success at lightweight. A crowd-pleasing trilogy with Lou Ambers resulted in a draw and two losses. (Henrietta went into labor during his third bout with Ambers; Henrietta lost

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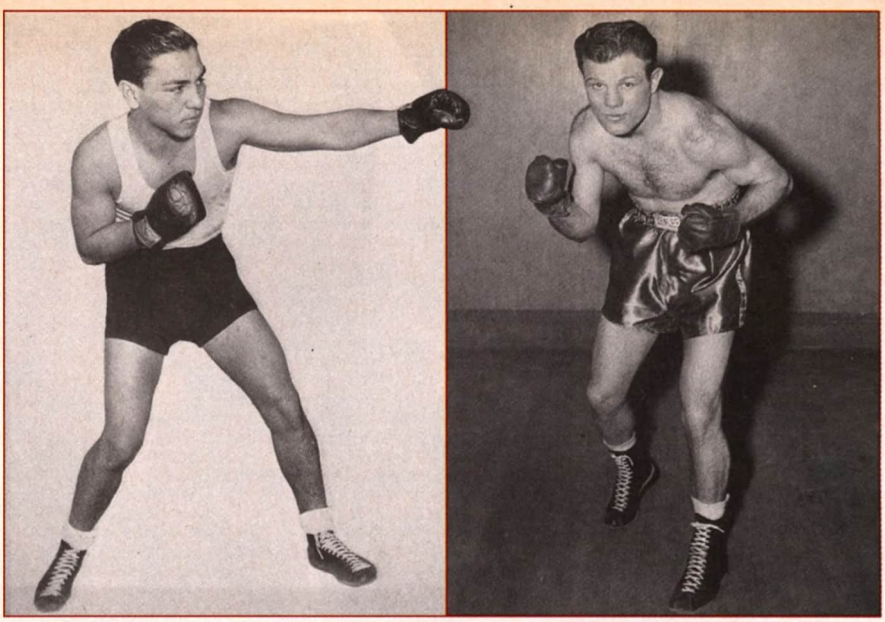

*In June 1940, (left) Arizmendi fought a 10-round draw with reigning NBA lightweight titleholder Sammy Angott(right). When the local favorite didn't get the nod, fans at the Los Angeles' Olympic Auditorium rioted.*

the baby, and Baby lost the fight.) Sammy Angott handed Arizmendi a loss and a draw. The draw sparked a riot at the Olympic Auditorium, as most fans thought Arizmendi had won.

By the 1940s, Arizmendi's world was changing. Many of his past opponents were joining the military. Even many of the movie stars he'd entertained were now in uniform. His biggest fan, Lupe Velez, was found dead with her head in a toilet after overdosing on sleeping pills. Arizmendi's old rival, Speedy Dado, couldn't afford a cot at an L.A. homeless shelter. After briefly supporting himself as Mae West's chauffer, Dado was now half-blind and penniless, selling programs outside the Olympic. There's no telling how many times Arizmendi saw Dado on his way to the arena, but it had to have been an unsettling reminder of boxing's grim side.

Not that Arizmendi needed reminding. He remained popular, but he was 20 pounds over his best weight, and after 15 years of boxing, he was as battle-scarred as any journeyman. He told the *Los Angeles Times* that he planned to retire and return to Mexico as a promoter, but he had no head for business. His marriage to Henrietta had produced a daughter, and although the union remained intact, it was rocky. There were also some minor scrapes with the law, including a drunken driving arrest. Cal Working, in a rare moment of candor, admitted, "When he doesn't think anything is at stake, he doesn't train."

"Moody, lazy, temperamental, profligate, courageous," *The Oakland Tribune*'s Al Cohn wrote of Arizmendi in 1942. "He has no idea of the value of money, shrugs his shoulders at success and adversity alike."

After losing six of his last eight fights, Arizmendi quit boxing and joined the war effort in 1943. A headline in the *Los Angeles Times* blared: "Beware Axis, Arizmendi Joins U.S. Navy!"

Arizmendi, inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2004, was a dreamer, often skipping training to go to the movies. Unfortunately, there'd be no Hollywood ending for Arizmendi. In retirement his weight soared and he developed diabetes. On December 31, 1962, Arizmendi died at age 48.

He was as good as a fighter can be without being great. It's understandable if Arizmendi was cavalier about wins and losses. For a boy who'd faced the possibility of life in a wheelchair, throwing punches may have been victory enough. ■

***Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.***

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**Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100.** Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, overhyped heavyweights.

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**Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive.** Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

**Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing?** Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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# [Summary]

## Heavyweights

Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Hasim Rahman
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Nicolay Valuev W 12 Evander Holyfield
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Francesco Pianeta W 12 Johann Duhaupas
James Toney W 12 Fres Oquendo
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Daniel Jacobs KO 2 Victor Lares
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PHOTO BY DEAN TREML/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Heavyweight Evander Holyfield bangs Nicolay Valuev in a controversial loss***

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*(Retains WBC Title)*
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Manuel Vargas KO 4 Daniel Reyes

## Tomasz Adamek W 12 Steve Cunningham

***Newark, New Jersey:*** Styles may indeed make fights, but until the opening bell rings, it's never certain how those styles will mesh and what type of fight they'll make. Cunningham, 197, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Adamek, 198, Gilowice, Poland, had such contrasting styles that no one expected a Fight of Year candidate coming into their matchup for the vacant RING cruiserweight world championship at the Prudential Center. But it turned out to be an instant classic.

Cunningham, 32, kept coming forward, blistering Adamek to the head with lead rights and dominating large portions of the fight, only to have Adamek, also 32, fire back and jolt "USS" just when it seemed things were going the American's way. Adamek sent him down three times in all, and those knockdowns made the difference in Adamek grabbing THE RING championship and annexing the IBF title Cunningham was defending for the second time.

The second round was typical of the fight's drama. Cunningham came out fast, pelting the Pole with accurate, stinging overhand rights. Then, as the round was closing, Adamek fired back and caught Cunningham with a right hand, followed by left hook to the head for that put him on the canvas. Despite the knockdown, Cunningham's dominance for the rest of the round convinced judge John Stewart (USA) to score the round only 10-9 for Adamek. And when the same thing happened in the fourth—Cunningham batters Adamek, Adamek produces a knockdown—the other two judges, Clark Sammartino (USA) and Shafeeq Rashada (USA), each made that one only 10-9. Cunningham, 21-2 (11), hit the canvas a third time in the eighth, and that one was scored 10-8 by all three judges.

"Adamek never really hurt me; they were all flash knockdowns," Cunningham said. "I think what lost the fight for me was the fourth round. I had him in trouble and went for the kill, and then got caught. I wanted to box, but I got into his fight. I still think I did enough to win, but he did knock me down three times."

Adamek, 36-1 (24), was wobbled a few times, but never really seemed badly hurt by Cunningham's punches. Cunningham finished stronger in the championship rounds, but it wasn't enough to close the gap on the scorecards.

Stewart scored it 116-110 for Adamek, Sammartino had it 114-112 for Cunningham, and Rashada's 115-112 score for Adamek put the Pole over the top. THE RING scored it 113-112 for Adamek.

"I knew Cunningham would be a tough challenge because he's the champion," Adamek said. "He's a tough fighter, but he doesn't have a punch. My style was the difference. From the beginning, I knew Steve couldn't hurt

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Amamek drives Cunningham into the ropes***

me. I knew if I kept going forward, I could get him with one more shot because I had quicker hands and faster combinations."

The referee was Earl Morton (USA).

Television: **Versus**

Promoters: **Don King Productions, Main Events**

(12-11-08)

***Joseph Santoliquito***

### Joseph Agbeko W 12 William Gonzalez

***Newark, New Jersey:*** Although both had fought on U.S. television a time or two, for the most part, Agbeko, 118, Bronx, New York, via Accra, Ghana, and Gonzalez, 117, Managua, Nicaragua, were unknowns when they entered the Prudential Center ring for their Versus-televised showdown underneath Adamek-Cunningham. Over the 12 ensuing rounds, fight fans quickly became familiar with them. It was a crowd-pleasing battle in which both men acquitted themselves well and positioned themselves for future TV dates.

The 28-year-old Agbeko was making his first defense of the IBF bantamweight title, 15 months after winning it from Luis Perez. Gonzalez, 27, had only fought once in the States before, losing via third-round knockout in a memorable slugfest on Telefutura against Jhonny Gonzalez.

Agbeko struck first, buckling Gonzalez' knees with a jolting right in the opening round. But the challenger hung on, then created space to establish punching distance and began tossing powershots of his own as the bell sounded to end the round.

The second round featured furious exchanges between the two, as Agbeko blended hooks to the body with powershots to the head. Gonzalez battled back and carried momentum into the third round, rattling the titlist a few times with right hooks.

In the fourth, a headbutt opened a cut over Gonzalez' left eye. To make matters worse for the Nicaraguan, a crushing left hook crashed into his jaw late in the round.

In the ninth, the two were winging hooks at each other, but as was typical of most of the fight, Gonzalez, 21-3 (19), was on the worse end of those exchanges. Gonzalez battled back by digging uppercuts in the 10th and 11th rounds, though he really needed a knockdown or two to climb into contention.

There was little dispute among the ringside press over who won, though judge Tom Kaczmarek (USA) somehow saw it 114-114. Judges Larry Doggette (USA) and Lawrence Layton (USA) made up for that questionable scorecard, each giving the fight to Agbeko by 116-112 scores, which is also how THE RING saw it.

## THE RING Fighter of the Month

# Manny Pacquiao

There's a temptation to throw someone else a bone and give the Fighter of the Month honors to somebody other than Pacquiao, since the guy is on the cover of this magazine, has been named the Fighter of the Year, and could probably care less about one more little piece of recognition. It would be nice to be able to spread the wealth a bit. But it would also be wrong. The simple truth is, no matter how sick we are of giving Pac-Man his props, he deserves to be named Fighter of the Month for blowing out Oscar De La Hoya.

Say what you want about De La Hoya's advanced age or the possibility that he overtrained; the fact is that nobody has ever beaten him in such one-sided fashion, not even the significantly larger Bernard Hopkins. In every defeat, Oscar was always competitive. But not against Pacquiao. This looked like Wayne Gretzky taking a penalty shot against someone who'd never worn ice skates before.

No, Pacquiao isn't going to get teary eyed at the prospect of being named Fighter of the Month, not at this stage of his decorated career. But it doesn't make him any less worthy. He's the best in the world, and he was the best this month by a vast margin.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Agbeko staves off strong challenge from Gonzalez*

"I think I deserved a unanimous decision," Agbeko, 26-1 (22), told THE RING afterward. "He gave me good competition, but I think I clearly beat him."

Earl Brown (USA) was the referee.

Promoters: **Don King Productions, Main Events**
(12-11-08)
***Joseph Santoliquito***

## Celestino Caballero KO 4 Steve Molitor

***Rama, Ontario:*** On paper, Caballero's bout against Molitor was one of the most intriguing fights of the year, and not just because it provided unification of two paper titles at 122 pounds. Hovering just beneath Israel Vasquez and Rafael Marquez, both the Panamanian Caballero, 121¾, and Canada's Molitor, 121¾, were clearly top-five fighters in arguably the sport's most talent-stacked division.

Of course, Caballero's four-round destruction of Molitor, on the Canadian's home turf at Casino Rama, now drastically changes the perceived hierarchy at junior featherweight.

That Caballero may be only a hair's breadth from Vasquez or Marquez was evidenced by his utter dominance of a very good fighter in the 28-year-old Molitor, who was not so much overrated as he was comprehensively outfought in every element of the game by a superior man.

Caballero, 32, has built a reputation for being unconventional and, at a freakish 5'11", frustratingly awkward. But within a minute of the opening round, any notions that he would be out-finessed by the sleek-boxing Molitor were dispelled. As Molitor circled the ring looking for openings, Caballero easily tracked down "The Canadian Kid" and let go an arsenal that effortlessly matched the hometown fighter's in speed.

The sold-out crowd of 5,300 was utterly stunned by the resonating power of Caballero's long punches, which landed with precision to the body just behind Molitor's elbows. By the end of the second, it was clear that Molitor, who was four inches shorter, was finding it difficult to cope with his opponent's height and reach, and lacked sufficient power to keep the fight competitive. Caballero was simply walking him down, picking off Molitor's punches, and weakening him with every blow.

The rout continued in the third with Caballero steadily scoring with long punches. The Panamanian set up the finish when an uppercut clipped Molitor and had him sagging along the ropes at the bell.

Caballero started quickly in the fourth, forcing an outgunned Molitor into full retreat. A desperate attempt by Molitor to clinch was met by a full-on shoulder thrust by the much stronger Caballero, sending the local favorite stumbling into the ropes. Caballero promptly followed through with a right hand that sent him sprawling face-first to the canvas, with more than two minutes left in the round.

A vacant-eyed Molitor staggered backward into the ropes as he quickly regained his feet, and referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) tolled eight before allowing the pummeling to continue. Caballero obliged, nailing Molitor, 28-1 (11), with several more right hands, buckling his knees as he folded on the ropes before Pabon stopped the slaughter at 0:52 of the round.

"Molitor was put to the test tonight and he failed miserably. It's that simple," said Showtime commentator Steve Farhood.

"He tried to fight his way back in the third round, but he got caught by that uppercut near the end of the round and wasn't able to recuperate," rationalized Molitor's trainer, Stephane Larouche, who had climbed onto the ring apron to throw in the towel just as Pabon moved in to stop the fight.

Carnage morphed into celebration with Caballero dropping to his knees in thankful prayer as his Panamanian entourage streamed into the ring in a display of unbridled reverie. Roberto Duran, who made the journey to Canada in hopes of witnessing the birth of a new Panamanian boxing immortal, wept openly in the ring as Caballero was lifted and carried on the shoulders of his countrymen.

"I told everyone I would break his baby face and I did," said Caballero, 32-2 (22). "When the first bell rang, I knew I was the better fighter."

After his commanding display, let's hope Caballero is given the opportunity to prove the same against Vasquez or Marquez in '09.

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**
Television: **Showtime**
(11-21-08)
***Paul Salgado***

## Paul Williams KO 8 Verno Phillips

***Ontario, California***: After dropping a decision to Carlos Quintana in February, Williams insisted that it wasn't him in the ring that night. Based on the way he's looked in his three fights since that lone career loss, that statement certainly appears valid.

Williams, 153½, cemented his place as one of the sport's top rising stars by stopping respected veteran Phillips, 154, in his first junior middleweight fight since April 2006. "The Punisher" gave Phillips a steady beating at Citizens Business Bank Arena until referee Jon Schorle (USA) stopped it before the start of the ninth round.

PHOTO BY BRIAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Williams was too big and too strong for Phillips***

It was an impressive display by the 27-year-old Williams. Phillips, who turned 39 on the day of the fight, hadn't been stopped since his fifth pro bout, back in 1988. Phillips held the IBF strap for eight months until having to vacate it in order to fight Williams.

At 6'1" and with a freakish 82-inch reach, southpaw Williams has long been touted for his physical advantages. But the Aiken, South Carolina, native showed against Phillips that he has plenty of heart and skill as well. He bled throughout due to a nasty cut above his right eye, the result of an accidental headbutt, but he remained poised. Williams continued to work the body and bang out crisp combinations while often choosing to meet the shorter Phillips at close range.

That willingness to slug it out left Williams open to the counters of Phillips. The older man caught Williams' attention at times, including with a right hook early in an entertaining second round, but lacked the one-punch power to do any damage. Williams' body barrage might have had a lot to do with that.

The outcome was becoming certain by the third, when Williams repeatedly drove Phillips, 42-11-1 (21), into the ropes and pounded the veteran's body with hooks. "I could feel Verno's legs leaving him," Williams said. Phillips kept trying to move forward into the Williams buzzsaw, but just kept taking punishment. A right hand nearly dropped him in the fourth, and by the sixth he was gasping for air, while the busy Williams showed no signs of slowing. Acting on the advice of ringside physician Paul Wallace, Schorle halted the fight after the eighth round.

"That's the first time I bled like that," said Williams, who landed 227 of 682 shots, according to CompuBox. "I had blood in my eye a lot, but I did what I had to do."

It was the third straight kayo win for Williams, who stopped Quintana in one round in their June rematch, then drilled middleweight Andy Kolle in 97 seconds in September. For some reason, the WBO sanctioned the Phillips bout as an "interim" title fight, putting Williams in line for a shot at Sergei Dzindziruk.

With Williams, 36-1 (27), grabbing the number-two spot in THE RING junior middleweight ratings, a matchup with top-ranked Vernon Forrest makes the most sense, though Al Haymon manages both and doesn't like to match his fighters against each other. At this point, there really aren't many managers out there who will want to match their guys against Williams.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(11-29-08)

## Chris Arreola KO 3 Travis Walker

***Ontario, California:*** Once again, Arreola showed that the phrase "exciting American heavyweight" doesn't have to be a contradiction in terms. But for the second straight fight, he proved that he shares a common trait with many other U.S. big men: the bad habit of showing up overweight.

Arreola came into his HBO *Boxing After Dark* co-feature with Walker at Citizens Business Bank Arena weighing 254, just 4½ pounds lighter than his career-high mass for a September knockout of Israel Garcia. Fortunately for Arreola, his questionable conditioning didn't become a major factor against Walker, 231, a tough but light-chinned slugger whose only other career loss was a controversial first-round stoppage to T.J. Wilson in 2007.

Arreola's weight did, however, seem to slow him down a bit and negatively impact his defense—and the result was the most exciting heavyweight bout of the year. Walker took the fight to Arreola in the first, winging hooks off the jab and throwing 106 punches in the opening three minutes, according to CompuBox. He stunned Arreola early with a left hook that drove the Riverside, California, native into the ropes. "Freight Train" then landed a straight right to the chin that had Arreola holding on.

Walker continued beating "The Nightmare" to the punch in the second, when the two mixed it up in the middle of the ring to start the round. Walker connected with a right to the body followed by a straight right to the face that dropped Arreola to a knee. Arreola bounced right back up but was clearly buzzed. Walker drove him back with straight rights

PHOTO BY BRIAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Arreola had to come off the floor to beat Walker***

and wobbled him with a left hook as he pounded away in hopes of landing the finisher.

The gutsy (literally and figuratively) Arreola calmly weathered the storm. Following a brief timeout to retrieve Walker's mouthpiece, Arreola came back to rock Walker with a right hook to the head. Completing the turnabout, a counter left followed by a right to the chin put Walker on his back 57 seconds before the bell.

Walker got up at four, but when action resumed, he was quickly driven into a corner with four wild rights to the head. Walker forced a clinch, and then was dropped for a second time by a right hook and a left hand. The 29-year-old Florida native was up again at four. Arreola only had 10 seconds before the bell, but managed to land a right hook and right uppercut, then a left hook and right hook, but Walker remained on his feet as the bell sounded to end what was a candidate for Round of the Year.

Arreola, 26-0 (23), continued firing combinations as the third round began. The first clean shot he landed, a left hook the jaw, sent Walker, 28-2-1 (22), falling onto his seat in a corner. Referee Jack Reiss (USA) immediately stopped it just 13 seconds into the round.

"I'm not concerned about my weight. I just wanted to go to war," said the 27-year-old Arreola, whose win set up a mandatory shot at unified beltholder Wladimir Klitschko in 2009. If that fight happens, Arreola might want to be a bit more concerned about his girth.

Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(11-29-08)

## Jorge Linares KO 5 Whyber Garcia

***Panama City, Panama:*** An extremely disappointing 2008 campaign for the supremely talented Linares ended on a higher note as he dusted Garcia at the Atlapa Convention Center in Garcia's hometown to claim a new belt in a new weight class. Due to ankle and shoulder injuries, this was Linares' first and only fight of '08 (he last fought in December '07), but "El Nino De Oro" showed no ill effects from the layoff.

Linares, 129, Tokyo, Japan, via Barinas, Venezuela, is considered one of the most skillful up-and-comers in the game. After making one defense of the WBC featherweight strap, then spending most of the year on the shelf, he saw an opportunity to snag another belt when his stablemate Edwin Valero vacated the WBA 130-pound title to move up to lightweight. The 23-year-old Linares was paired with 27-year-old journeyman Garcia, 129½, who'd been knocked out twice in his last five fights, and it was quickly apparent that this was a mismatch. Linares applied more pressure than usual, and a barrage in the fifth round prompted referee Steve Smoger (USA) to step in and save Garcia, 20-6 (14), at the 1:08 mark.

Hopefully, Linares, 26-0 (17), will enjoy a healthier '09 and will be back in action without another 11-month hiatus.

Promoter: **Promociones y Eventos del Istmo**
(11-28-08)

## Carl Froch W 12 Jean Pascal

***Nottingham, England:*** In a thrilling, back-and-forth battle that featured sustained exchanges and evoked memories of other stirring super middleweight wars such as Chris Eubank-Michael Watson II, Froch, 166½, Nottingham, England, came through the toughest test of his career to earn a unanimous decision over Pascal, 167½, Montreal, Canada, via Haiti, and secured the vacant WBC super middleweight title, which Joe Calzaghe had relinquished. The 10,000-strong crowd at the Trent FM Arena and a terrestrial TV audience in Britain in the millions were treated to a dramatic slugfest that will propel Froch into bigger fights against the world's foremost super middleweights.

"Jermain Taylor is the WBC mandatory challenger, I have had discussions with his promoter, Lou DiBella, and they are keen to do the fight," said Mick Hennessy, Froch's promoter. "We may have to go to America to make it happen, but that would be no problem for Carl. He's a world-class fighter and he'll travel wherever he has to, if the fight is right."

One fight that is unlikely to happen is Calzaghe-Froch, despite the war of words that erupted between the pair after Froch's victory. Calzaghe said, "I do not like the guy and I would stop him in three rounds anyway," while Froch retorted that the 36-year-old Welshman is "jealous" and "he will have to get in line." But Calzaghe made it clear before

his win over Roy Jones in November that he would never fight at super middleweight again, so Froch will have to secure alternative achievements over a prolonged period if he is to threaten the Calzaghe legacy.

Whether he will be able to engage many more times in the kind of encounter in which he found himself against Pascal is debatable, for it was the kind of bout that can take a toll on the victor as well as the vanquished. Both fighters had to come through some wicked punches in almost every round, with the opener setting the tone. Froch attacked behind his jab from the outset and quickly unloaded heavy artillery, but he had to weather hard right hands from Pascal before the round was over and a left hook to the chin caught him flush in the second. His low left hand also left him vulnerable to the Canadian's right over the top and they fought furiously for the initiative in round three, with Pascal's combinations gaining him a marginal advantage.

Pascal, 21-1 (14), tried to press the action more in rounds four and five, but Froch hit back in the sixth when he rocked the Canadian with a right to the chin, and he landed a further series of bludgeoning blows before the round was over. Marked under his right eye, Pascal sustained further punishment in round seven and the Englishman was in control at that point, but a strong rally by Pascal in round eight, including a series of left hooks and right hands, opened a cut over Froch's eye.

Froch, 31, landed a terrific left-right combination in the ninth that staggered Pascal, 26, though he managed to hold on and survive. The accumulation of damage on both men told in the 10th and 11th, rounds that they had to will their way through, Pascal with his right eye closing rapidly. The 12th featured desperate attempts by both men to close out the fight emphatically, but when the bell rang, the local hero knew that the victory would be his. Predrag Aleksic (Montenegro) scored 116-112, Tom Kaczmarek (USA) 118-110, and Herminio Cuevas (Mexico) 117-111, all for Froch. THE RING scored 116-112 for Froch, who revealed afterward that he had been cut over his right eye in training and had also suffered a cracked rib as well as a perforated eardrum in the final two weeks before the bout. He even had to overrule his promoter, who suggested postponing the fight.

"Taylor, Mikkel Kessler, all of the top guys, I'll be gunning for them now," said Froch, 24-0 (19). "This was a great night, especially in front of my home fans, but it's only the beginning, believe me."

The referee was Guido Cavalleri (Italy).

Promoter: **Hennessy Promotions**

(12-6-08)

***Brian Doogan***

## Kendall Holt W 12 Demetrius Hopkins

***Atlantic City, New Jersey***: Considering everything he had to deal with leading into this fight, the 27-year-old Holt had every reason to look bad against Hopkins. While this one certainly won't go down as a classic, Holt, 140, did earn some respect with the way he handled Hopkins, 140, and his prefight adversity.

More aggressive throughout, Holt outworked Hopkins en route to a split decision in front of a friendly crowd at Boardwalk Hall. It was Holt's first defense of the WBO junior welterweight belt he won in July from Ricardo Torres. Holt, 25-2 (13), was supposed to meet Torres in a rubber match, but the Colombian was supposedly sick, was unable to make weight, and pulled out six days before the fight. Holt also had to deal with the December 5 arrest of manager Henry Cortes on charges of conspiracy to distribute cocaine.

He hadn't exactly prepared for Hopkins' style. Torres and Hopkins, 28-1-1 (11), are as different as a lumberjack and a tree pruner. While the aggressive Torres is a forward-moving slugger, Hopkins relies on his movement and counterpunching. Like his uncle Bernard Hopkins, he's tough to look good against, but Holt did an admirable job.

The 28-year-old Hopkins had been off for 13 months and was originally scheduled to fight on the undercard. Still, he got off to a decent start in the opening round, when he was busier and landed a couple of rights off the jab while Holt kept his distance. Holt picked up the intensity in the second as "Rated R" began cutting off the ring and using combinations to punch his way inside. His shots often missed, and Hopkins frequently tied up the Paterson, New Jersey, native when the two got close. But Holt was busier and landed the cleaner shots, often to the body.

Things picked up late in the sixth, when Hopkins stunned Holt with a right uppercut, his best punch of the night. Holt answered with a straight right to the head that

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Holt was too busy for late-sub Hopkins***

wobbled the Philadelphian. Hopkins jumped on Holt to start the seventh, but with his opponent finally in front of him, Holt nearly dropped Hopkins with a pretty left hook to the chin. Hopkins went back to playing keep-away, relying solely on his jab.

Sensing the fight slipping away, Hopkins picked up the pace in waging a strong ninth round, and he came through with a nice right uppercut near the end of the 11th. He didn't do much in the 12th, though, as a determined Holt pelted Hopkins throughout in an attempt to seal it.

Luis Rivera (USA) scored it 117-111 and Alan Rubenstein (USA) had it 116-112, both for Hopkins. THE RING agreed with Rivera's score. Judge Julie Lederman (USA) saw it much differently than most, giving it to Hopkins by a 115-113 tally. "I was shocked when I heard that first score for him," Holt told the *Press Of Atlantic City*. "I thought that he had won maybe two rounds at the most. That was it. No more than that."

The win by Holt set up an April unification bout with THE RING'S number-one contender Timothy Bradley, with the winner possibly in line for a crack at Manny Pacquiao or division champ Ricky Hatton.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-13-08)

## Edgar Sosa KO 7 Juanito Rubillar

***Mexico City, Mexico:*** Sosa, boxing's busiest beltholder, returned after only a two-month break between defenses, and the Mexico City veteran scored arguably his most impressive title defense yet in turning away respected mandatory challenger Rubillar of the Philippines. A liver shot set up the finish late in the seventh round, giving Sosa his seventh successful defense of the WBC light flyweight title in a 16-month span. At this rate, Joe Louis could be looking over his shoulder just three years from now.

The 31-year-old Rubillar, 105¾, had won seven straight coming into this fight, earning the third major title shot of his career (plus two attempts at "interim" belts). This was only the second time in his 64 fights that he was kayoed, and it forces the question of whether this will be his final title attempt.

About 10,000 fans showed up at Arena Mexico to watch what was expected to be a competitive bout, and there were moments where they grew nervous for the hometown titlist. Sosa, 107¾, is generally a technical boxer, but the 29-year-old turned slugger in spots to secure the win. He had to because a nasty cut over his right eye—caused by a clash of heads, but ruled by referee Harold Laurens (Netherlands) to be from a punch—threatened to halt the fight in the southpaw challenger's favor.

The first three rounds were close, but Sosa took control in the fourth, and due to the WBC's open scoring system, found out he was ahead 38-37, 39-36, and 40-36 after that round. The Mexican continued to turn up the aggression, swarming Rubillar with combinations, until a left hook to the liver hurt him badly in the seventh. The Filipino remained on his feet, but couldn't defend himself from Sosa's resolute attack, and the fight was stopped with six seconds remaining in the round and Rubillar held up by the ropes in the corner.

"Edgar is a great champion," said Rubillar, 46-11-7 (22). "I gave it my best, but it wasn't enough."

"This was a real battle and Rubillar is the warrior I expected him to be," declared Sosa, 34-5 (18). "I think I proved I could overcome adversity as a true champion."

Sosa proceeded to call out RING champion Ivan Calderon, which would be one of the most meaningful fights that could be made at 108 pounds.

Promoter: **Boxeo de Gala**
(11-29-08)

PHOTO BY ALFREDO ESTRELLA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Sosa sets up Rubillar with a jab***

## James Toney W 12 Fres Oquendo

***Cabazon, California***: It seemed strange that on the same day Toney met Oquendo at the Morongo Casino Resort, Hasim Rahman got a crack at Wladimir Klitschko. After all, Rahman had quit against Toney in a July bout after an accidental headbutt resulted in a nasty cut above Rahman's left eye (the result was later changed from a knockout for Toney to a no-contest). But against fringe-contender Oquendo, Toney didn't do much to strengthen his case for another big payday.

The 40-year-old Toney, 230, sputtered his way to a sloppy split decision win against Oquendo, 219, who took the fight on a week's notice after Tony

Thompson pulled out with acute bronchitis. Toney, 71-6-3 (43), got off to a decent start before Oquendo, 29-5 (18), rallied late. A one-point deduction for rabbit punching in round eight wound up costing Oquendo a draw.

Excessive holding marred the bout, and many of the rounds were tough to score. Toney had early success with his right hand, and he had the Chicago-based Puerto Rican holding on in the first after landing a solid one upstairs. Oquendo continued eating counter rights in the early rounds as he struggled to get his jab working.

The most memorable moment of the forgettable fight came during a clinch in the fourth, when Toney slipped on a ring advertisement and comically tumbled under the ropes and out of the ring. The bout resumed after a brief timeout. Meanwhile, Oquendo's busier pace and somewhat effective jab were getting him back into the fight as Toney began looking like a tired, faded fighter.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Toney was lucky to get the nod over Oquendo***

Toney continued ducking his head to the side, which led to rabbit punches from the 35-year-old Oquendo. Toney said afterward that he had a bout scheduled for February, and he was afraid of a headbutt-induced cut sidelining him for the fight. His caution led to Oquendo being warned by ref Lou Moret (USA) in the seventh for rabbit punching, then penalized for it in a crucial eighth that went 10-8 for Toney on all three judges' cards.

Continually beating Toney to the punch, Oquendo came back to dominate the final three rounds. He had Toney hurt in the 11th, but didn't rush to capitalize. Oquendo began the 12th with a hard right hand, but a tired Toney was able to coast to the finish throwing few punches.

David Mendoza (USA) scored it 115-112 and Marty Denkin (USA) had it 114-113, both for Toney, while Tony Crebs (USA) had Oquendo winning 116-110. THE RING scored it 114-113 for Oquendo, whom CompuBox had landing 222 of 740 shots, compared to 154 of 491 for Toney.

"It was a tough fight, but he didn't want it," Toney said. "I was more aggressive the whole fight. He ran the entire fight."

Television: **Versus**

Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**

(12-13-08)

## Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12
## Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym

***Phitsanulok, Thailand:*** There was a time when Thai promoters and managers opposed matching their fighters against one another. With the propagation of alphabet squads, there are a copious number of belts to go around, and the Thai promoters and managers wanted to take full advantage of this. Their philosophy: When two Thai fighters step in the ring together, there's one less chance, however temporary, that a Thai will become an alphabet titleholder.

This seems to be changing. Harsh economic conditions and the increase in outlandish title eliminators have induced Thailand's boxers to pair up more regularly. So when Petchyindee Promotions announced that WBC strawweight titlist Oleydong would take on Pornsawan, it came as no surprise. With 50 fights and only one defeat between Oleydong and Pornsawan, the fight had the appearance of a first-rate matchup.

Oleydong is an atypical Thai boxer, relying on pugilistic skill centering on speedy combinations, equally quick feet, and constant head movement. Pornsawan is the prototypical Thai fighter, a straight-ahead plodder content to eat as many punches as necessary to land one. His practice of wading through his opponent's shots had been successful 21 out of 22 times; however, in losing, his glaring inability to handle a boxer with sound skills became painfully evident. Against Nietes, Pornsawan faced an inferior version of Oleydong and was unable to get the job done.

When the bell rang, the two Thais wasted no time. The 23-year-old southpaw Oleydong, 105, snapped out his jab-straight left combo and the pugnacious 30-year-old Pornsawan, 105, strode forward, missing with the majority of his excruciatingly slow punches but undaunted nonetheless. For the duration of the bout, Oleydong zipped and zapped, slipped and slid, and bobbed and weaved, while Pornsawan mauled and brawled, continually attacking in an attempt to land the single punch that would win the fight.

The Thai crowd sensed that while there is always a chance, Pornsawan's chances were limited. Round after round, the skillful Oleydong strode around the ring as if on wheels, while Pornsawan, 21-2 (16), trudged on with concrete slippers. Perhaps because of their previous affiliation as sparring partners or perhaps because of Oleydong's undeniable ring superiority, the bout resembled a sparring session the longer it went.

After Oleydong, 29-0 (12), threw his jab or right hook, he would slide right and out of danger. When ending a combination with his left, he shimmied left, again untouched and unfazed.

By the end of the fight, Pornsawan's bruised and puffy face were physical examples of the difference between a skilled boxer and a rugged brawler. All three judges declared Oleydong the winner: Gelasio Perez Huerta (Mexico) had it 120-108, Noppharat Sricharoen (Thailand) 118-110, and Franz Marti (Switzerland) 117-113. THE RING had it 119-109.

(11-27-08)

***Scott Mallon***

## Amir Khan KO 2 Oisin Fagan

***London, England:*** Having erred spectacularly in selecting Colombian powerpuncher Breidis Prescott as an opponent in September, a choice punished ruthlessly by Prescott's first-round knockout, Khan's handlers made a safe decision in bringing in Fagan, 134½, Dublin, Ireland, to begin to get the 2004 Olympic silver medalist's career back on track. Khan, 135, Bolton, England, duly completed the job he was expected to do, flooring the Irishman twice in the opening round and finishing matters in the second to cap a performance at the ExCeL Arena that his new trainer, Freddie Roach, described as "impressive."

"We have a lot of work to do, but Amir is able and willing. He's a good listener and a very capable athlete, and I thought he did really well," said Roach, who watched the brief encounter two days later, having been otherwise engaged in Las Vegas with Manny Pacquiao. Even allowing for Fagan's limitations and lack of threat, Roach was right in his assessment of Khan's display. The 21-year-old was more economical with his punches and picked his shots better than he has demonstrated in the past and his jab looks like it will become a formidable weapon under Roach's tutelage. His defense was tight and his natural gifts did the rest. Inevitable improvement over the next year at Roach's Wild Card Gym in Hollywood should elevate Khan into championship contention, though we will know much more when he steps back into the ring with a puncher, which Fagan most certainly is not.

Despite having gone the 10-round distance against former IBF lightweight titleholder Paul Spadafora in 2007, losing only by a split decision, Fagan, 22-6 (13), was made to order, and Khan wasted no time in establishing superiority. His sparring sessions with Pacquiao, in which he was able to hold his own against the dynamic Filipino, have helped to restore his confidence. Boxing smoothly behind his jab, Khan countered Fagan's early rushes and fired off quick combinations before he met his opponent with a perfect short right hook to the jaw that sent him to the canvas. The game Fagan was back on his feet at British referee Mickey Vann's count of four, but he was swiftly dispatched to the floor again when Khan connected with a battery of blows to the head. Fagan got up again, though he revealed later that his ankle was broken and his ability to escape the Khan onslaught was significantly reduced. Fagan fell for a third time toward the end of the first round, which was ruled a slip, but Khan wasted no time in round two.

PHOTO BY LEON NEAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

***Fagan proved the perfect comeback opponent for Khan***

Connecting to the head and body with hard hooks and punishing uppercuts, the British boxer forced Fagan onto the ropes and, just as the towel was thrown into the ring by his trainer, John Breen, referee Vann intervened with the 34-year-old Irishman taking several needless shots. "I know what I did wrong against Prescott and I'm determined to put it all right working with Freddie and learning from guys in the gym like Manny Pacquiao, and tonight was just the first step on the road back," said Khan, 19-1 (15). "The jab worked well, I got the job done, and I'll be going back to the Wild Card Gym in January to prepare for my next fight." This will be in February, promoter Frank Warren confirmed, and Roach will be available to travel over ahead of the contest to be in Khan's corner.

Promoter: **Frank Warren's Sports Network**

(12-6-08)

***Brian Doogan***

## Raul Garcia W 12 Jose Luis Varela

***Loreto, Mexico:*** Would you be interested in a rematch between Wladimir Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov? How about Joe Calzaghe and Roy Jones? For reasons beyond explanation, a rematch of similarly absurd proportions took place in the strawweight division shortly before the holiday season, as Mexico's Garcia, 105, made his second defense of the IBF title against the same man he fought in his first defense, Venezuela's Varela, 105. Had their first bout been a competitive affair, a rematch would have been an understandable course of action. But Garcia won by unanimous scores of 118-110 the first time around, and, not surprisingly, their second meeting was even more one-sided.

This was actually Varela's fourth title shot in his last eight fights, a span in which he's posted a record of 2-5 with 1 no-contest. The 30-year-old challenger simply didn't have the weaponry to keep up with the unbeaten 26-year-old titlist. Garcia, 25-0-1 (15), was in charge the whole way, the highlight coming in round 11 when he dropped Varela, 15-6 (7) with 1 no-contest, with a left hook to the liver.

Judges Jonathan Davis (USA) and Fritz Werner (USA) both scored the fight 120-107, while Alejandro Lopez Cid (Mexico) saw it 119-108, all for the talented "Rayito."

The referee was Wayne Hedgepeth (USA).

Promoter: **Promotora Eco Servicios**

(12-13-08)

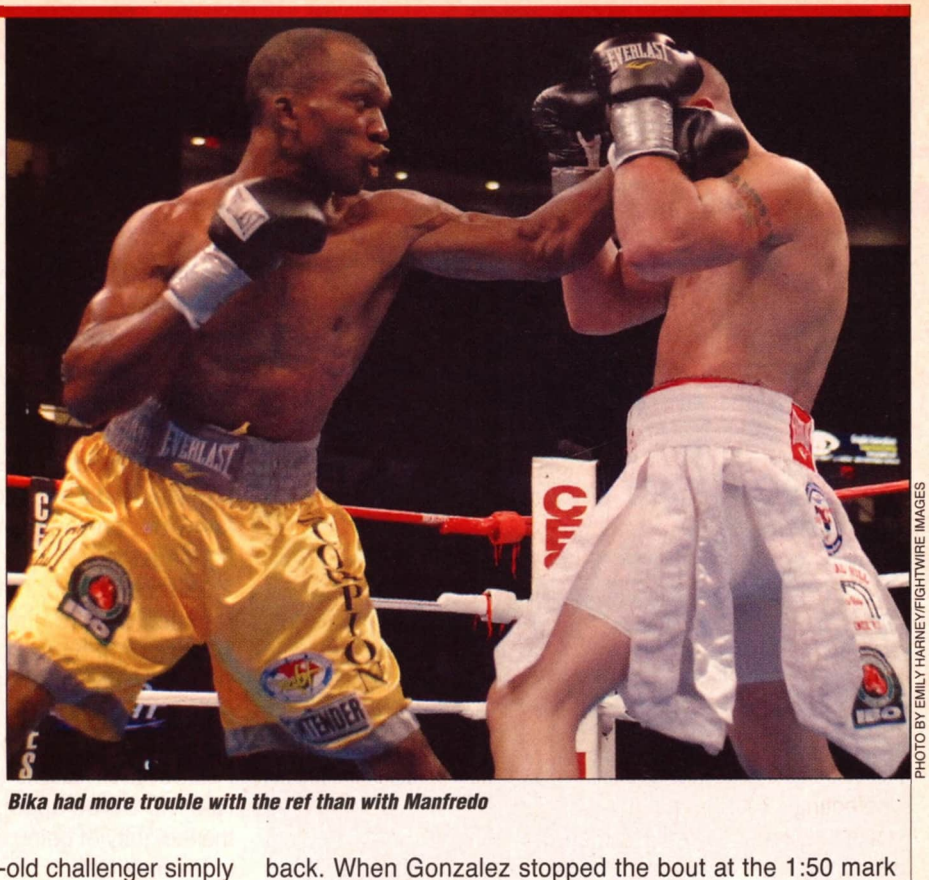



PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

***Bika had more trouble with the ref than with Manfredo***

## Sakio Bika KO 3 Peter Manfredo

***Providence, Rhode Island:*** Bika, 166, Sydney, Australia, needed less than three rounds to dispatch hometown hero Manfredo, 167¾. Anyone expecting a memorable shootout between Bika, the winner of *The Contender* Season Three, and Manfredo, the Season One runner-up, had to be disappointed in the outcome.

Bika, 27-3-2 (17), controlled the action until the end of the second round, when a tangle of feet sent both fighters to the canvas. Complaining that he'd been tripped, Bika scowled as referee Ricky Gonzalez (USA) ruled a knockdown and gave him a mandatory eight-count. An angry Bika stomped out for the third round and dropped Manfredo with a straight right. "The Pride Of Providence" rose but found himself under attack, as Bika worked him over along the ropes with hooks and uppercuts. Manfredo didn't seem to be in grave danger, but he wasn't fighting back. When Gonzalez stopped the bout at the 1:50 mark of round three, Manfredo didn't protest.

"He's so strong," said Manfredo, 31-6 (16), of Bika. "He throws wide, but everything he throws is strong. I tried to roll and catch him in between, but I couldn't."

Manfredo entered the ring wearing the same resigned expression he wore going into his 2007 loss to Joe Calzaghe in Wales. This time, the bout was in Manfredo's backyard, taking place in the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence. Different venue, same timid look. And same result. Against soft opposition, Manfredo wades in like his Italian boxing heroes of the past, but when the competition is stronger, he falls short.

"I'm okay," said Manfredo. "I have a lot of talent and I'm only 27. I'll have to think about what I'm going to do."

Manfredo has just about cashed in all of his chits from *The Contender*; it's difficult to imagine him getting another important fight.

Bika, though, was already penciling in his 2009 calendar.

"Next year is going to be good for me," the 29-year-old said. "Next, I want Bernard Hopkins."

Hopkins probably has other plans, but Bika's rugged style would make him a good match for any of the top fighters at 168.

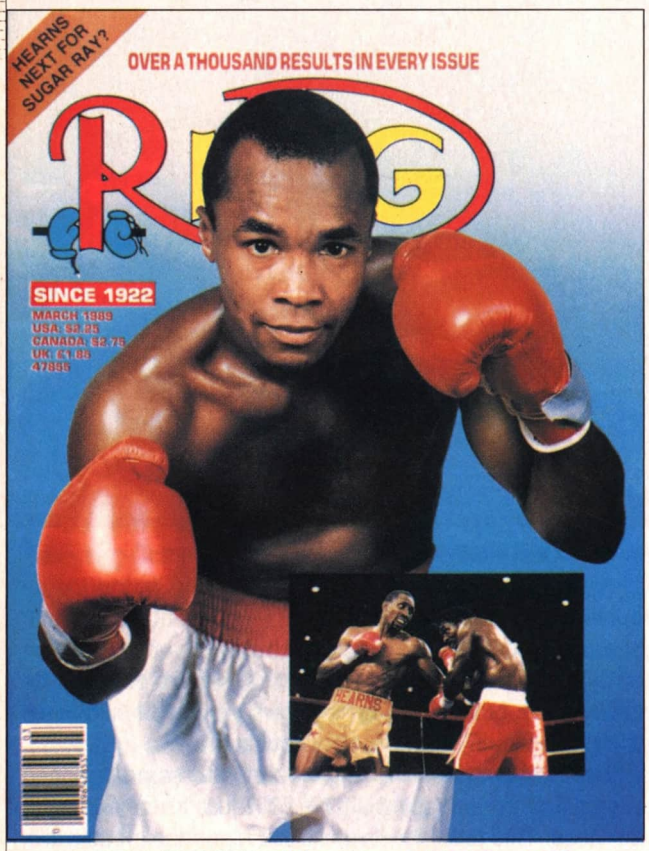
Television: **Versus**

Promoters: **Tournament of Contenders, Jimmy Burchfield's Classic Entertainment & Sports**

(11-13-08)

***Don Stradley*** ■

# March 1989




**COVER STORY: "Leonard At Final Crossroads?"** by Nigel Collins addresses where Sugar Ray Leonard should go next, as well as gauging Leonard's passion for boxing. It appeared Sugar Ray was far from through after dispatching Donny Lalonde in nine rounds at Ceasars Palace in Las Vegas to win dual titles in claiming the WBC super middleweight and WBC light heavyweight belts.

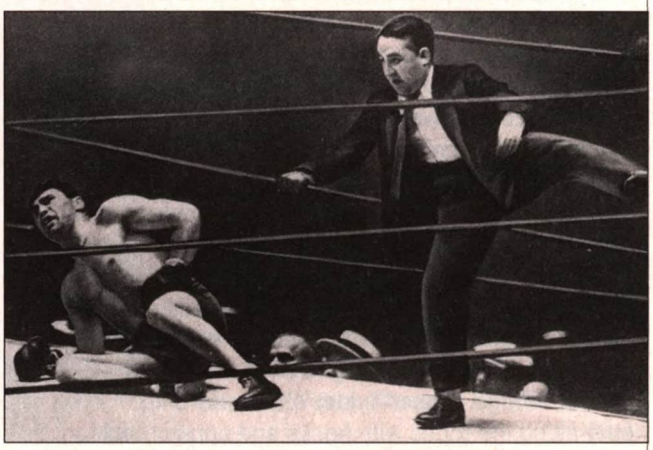
The Lalonde victory certainly had Leonard's juices flowing: "For a frenzied minute of unadulterated joy, Leonard abandoned his usual conservative posture and cut loose in an unrestrained victory celebration," wrote Collins. "He jumped up on the ropes, thrust his fists towards the heavens, and soaked in the adulation of his adoring public. This was the moment that made it all worthwhile, worth all the work and all the risks, an ultimate high only the ring can provide. And if you looked into his eyes at that instant, you knew not only why he fights on, but that he would surely fight again."

After the fight, talk sprang up immediately about a rematch with Tommy Hearns, eight years after their epic welterweight battle. Leonard granted Hearns his wish, but Hearns ended up with a sour taste in his mouth again, after the two fought to an entertaining draw that many observers thought Hearns had won.

Leonard fought three more times, beating a tired Roberto Duran again, losing to Terry Norris, and suffering the indignity of being stopped by Hector "Macho" Camacho, in his final fight.

**"Major Moments"** by Joseph D'O'Brian examines major moments that affected boxing history by spinning off of the Leonard-Lalonde fight, the first event in boxing history to depend almost entirely on pay-per-view sales. Another such moment discussed was when Max Schmeling won the heavyweight title on a foul, after Jack Sharkey sent the German to the canvas on a dubious low blow, "clutching his naughty bits."

**"Bring On Chavez"** by THE RING's Las Vegas correspondent Jack Welsh was an amusing sidebar to the main Leonard piece, featuring Roger Mayweather's



*Schmeling grabs himself during a telling moment in boxing history*

## World Champions

*(for the period ended December 1)*
**Heavyweight:** Mike Tyson
**Light Heavyweight**: vacant
**Middleweight**: Sumbu Kalambay
**Welterweight:** Lloyd Honeyghan
**Lightweight:** Julio Cesar Chavez
**Featherweight:** Antonio Esparragoza
**Bantamweight:** vacant
**Flyweight:** Yong-Kang Kim

12-round decision over Vinny Pazienza. It wasn't, however, the triumph by Mayweather, who retained the WBC super lightweight belt that made the fight intriguing. The most memorable moment came seconds after the final bell. Lou Duva, Pazienza's trainer, and, as Welsh noted, "one of boxing's most volatile cornermen," came rushing at Mayweather after the fight. Mayweather caught the oncoming Duva with a right uppercut, sending the round man to the canvas.

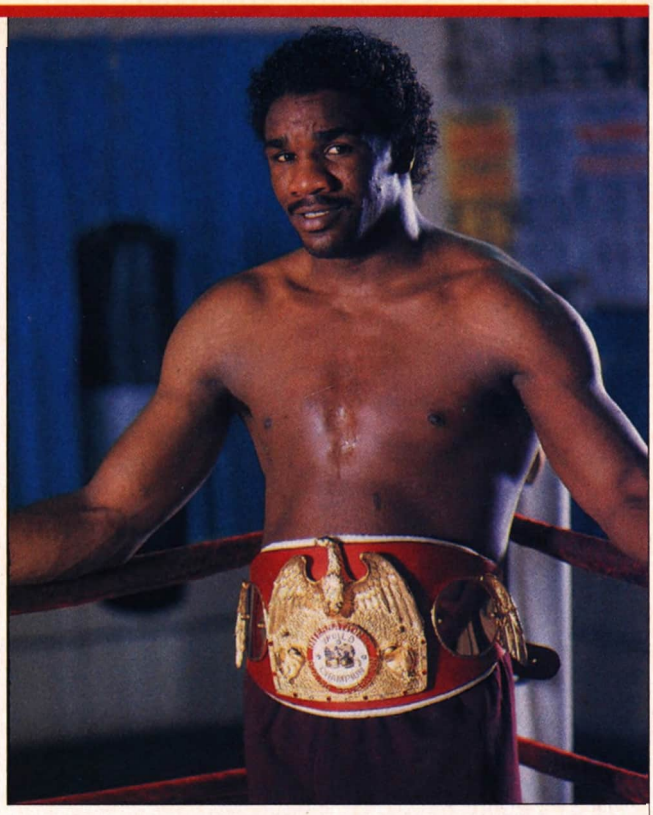
Duva, then 67, sustained a cut on his left cheek and had to be restrained from charging Mayweather again, making the whole scene a laugh riot. It was one of those rare moments in boxing when the winner scored both a decision and a TKO the same night.

**"Tangled Up In The Blue Section"** by Phil Woolever is another interesting sidebar to the Leonard-Lalonde event. While one all-time great was in the ring dusting off Lalonde, another watched from his ringside seat.

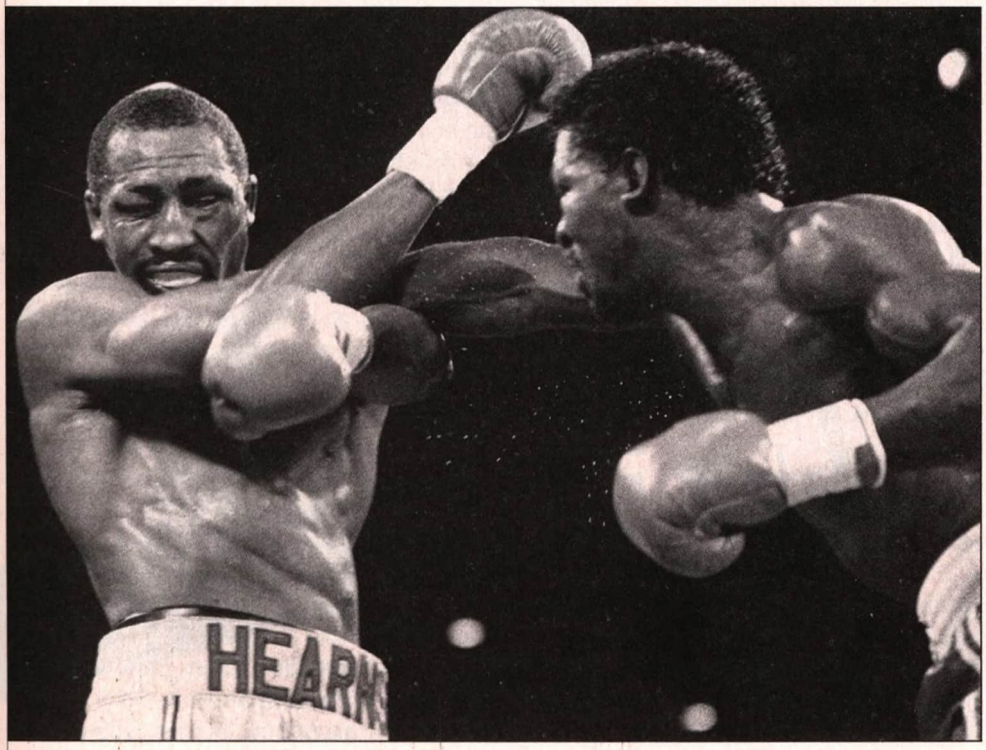
Bob Dylan was there as a friend to Lalonde. Dylan's "Winnepeg Boy, This Is Your Night" played in Lalonde's dressing room prior to the fight, but Woolever felt Dylan's "Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" was the more appropriate theme.

Woolever also notes that the celebrities were provided with free ringside seats, "Many with little interest in boxing got the best view. Amidst the thick hoopla, Dylan was the stranger in his proverbial 'strange land' where 'stand when they cheer' was the rule.'"

**"Hit Man Edges The Heat In A Scorcher"** by Jack Welsh covers the troubles Tommy Hearns had in scoring a split-decision victory over James "The Heat" Kinchen. Eight years later, "The Hit Man" still felt the sting of his first professional loss to Leonard, yet found himself in an unusual role, vociferously pulling for his arch-rival against Lalonde in hopes of getting a rematch, which came in June 1989, ending with a frustrating draw. Hearns went on to fight 17 more years. His last bout came in 2006, a 10th-round TKO victory over journeyman Shannon Landberg.



*Williams found a home in France, after feeling neglected in the U.S.*




*Hearns survives Kinchen's heat in setting up the Leonard rematch*

**"Prince In Exile"** is Bernard Fernandez' story about how little American TV exposure or interest "Prince" Charles Williams was receiving. The IBF light heavyweight titlist had to fight abroad, opting to ply his trade in France, where two title defenses garnered him $220,000.

**"Hines Upsets Hilton"** is an account of Robert Hines getting up from two knockdowns to beat Matthew Hilton and win the IBF junior middleweight belt. ■

 (Continued from Page 24)

smoking weed before—but it just didn't fit me. I wanted to be like people I grew up with. You know, I tried it, but it just wasn't me. It made me feel fuzzy. So I'm like, *This is not my lifestyle.* You know what I'm saying? And then, 14 years old, I went to the gym and I found what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Key decisions, starting with that first trip to the gym, set Jacobs' career path. Staying amateur through the four-year cycle after the 2004 Olympics was next, despite winning National Golden Gloves and National Police Athletic League titles that same year, at 17. Then, upon turning professional after narrowly missing the 2008 U.S. Olympic team, effective relationships with Golden Boy Promotions and manager Al Haymon kept Jacobs active, with all 13 fights completed within his first year.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

***Jacobs jams a left into Lares en route to a second-round TKO victory. The bout was on the Pacquiao-De La Hoya undercard, one of the many prime preliminary spots "The Golden Child" has garnered since turning pro in December 2007.***

That included eight first-round victories and appearances on some of the biggest cards, including, in addition to Pacquiao-De La Hoya, De La Hoya-Steve Forbes, Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton, Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor, Joe Calzaghe-Bernard Hopkins, Hopkins-Pavlik, Calzaghe-Roy Jones, Shane Mosley-Ricardo Mayorga, and Juan Manuel Marquez-Joel Casamayor.

"That's meant a lot to me because a lot of guys don't get this kind of opportunity," Jacobs said. "I've been fighting under legends. That's something special in itself. I fought on Roy Jones' undercard in Madison Square Garden. It doesn't get any better than that, you know? So, hopefully, one day, I can be headlining and be the top guy on a card, rather than just the up-and-comer."

For now, the 21-year-old Jacobs is just that, after successfully picking low-hanging fruit before a mild step up in competition in late-2008. To reach some lofty second-year goals, another significant leap is necessary.

"The level of competition I've been fighting hasn't been high, but it hasn't been low at all," Jacobs said. "So we're going accordingly and we've been getting guys out of there. You can say I've been fighting bums, but it's all on how you fight that bum, or on how you get that bum out of there. I've been getting everybody out of there, so there isn't anything bad you can say about who I'm fighting—or about me, period."

Rountree quite nearly boasted two U.S. Olympians out of Starrett City Gym, both of whom he trained from juniors. Sadam Ali made it, but Jacobs lost the Olympic Trials final to Shawn Estrada.

The early selection of the Olympic team allowed Jacobs to get a major jump professionally when he didn't make it. He also avoided the year of confined tutelage in Olympic principles under unfamiliar coaches, which he called "absurd" and "the reason why the whole U.S. Olympic team wasn't successful."

"It hurt me not to make the Olympics," he said, "but it wasn't necessary, because I'm in a better position than those guys are right now. I'm with the right team and I'm the right kind of fighter. I think I'm going to be a superstar someday, Olympics or no Olympics. World champions that didn't make the Olympics, they were some of the biggest boxing superstars, so I plan to do that."

Rountree, 47, openly wonders how far to push the boundaries with Jacobs because "each time he fights what we think is a harder guy, he keeps knocking them out." Jacobs' December win was his first scheduled eight-rounder, though scheduled distances are irrelevant unless they last, which has been done by only one former amateur opponent, Emmanuel Gonzalez, in a six-rounder.

Jacobs' only big expenditure since turning pro has been his condominium in Long Island City. But his humility stops at the gym door. Asked if he owes something to the amateur rivals such as Estrada and Shawn Porter, he replied, "Yeah, an ass-whipping."

His nickname, "The Golden Child," says plenty.

Jacobs graduated from Erasmus High School, which is known for high-achieving alumni, including singers Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand, sports owners Al Davis and Jerry Reinsdorf, actresses Susan Heyward and Barbara Stanwyck, author Mickey Spillane, chess champion Bobby Fischer, and boxing promoter Bob Arum.

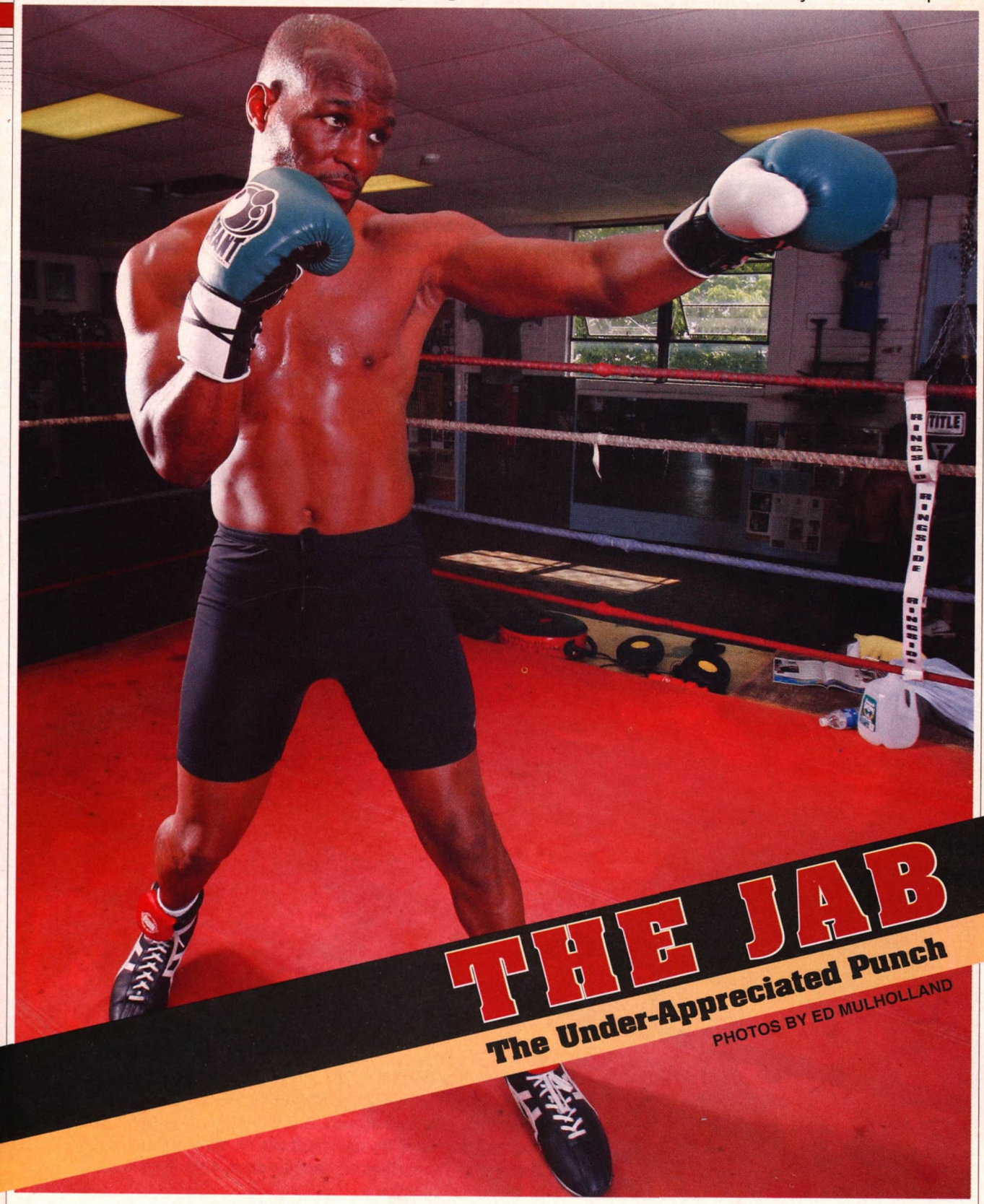
Jacobs hopes to add his name to that list quickly. Both he and Rountree agree he'll be ready to pursue a championship fight by the end of his second year.

"This year, I wanted to be the top prospect of the year, period," Jacobs said. "That was my goal. Hopefully, I accomplished that. Next year, I want to be maybe the number-one contender. Then, early in 2010, middle of 2010, I want to be a champion. So if everything, God willing, goes according to plan, you've got your next superstar." ■

# [Perfect Execution]

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



# THE JAB

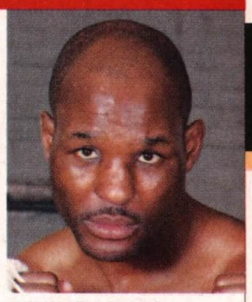
## The Under-Appreciated Punch

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

*The jab is the most under-appreciated punch in boxing. That's because you don't knock anyone out with it, like the right hand or the left hook. It's the most ignored punch in boxing, but it shouldn't be. It's the first lesson in boxing when you start to learn offense: the jab. It sets everything up. There are a lot of fighters out there that don't use the jab, and they pay the price.*

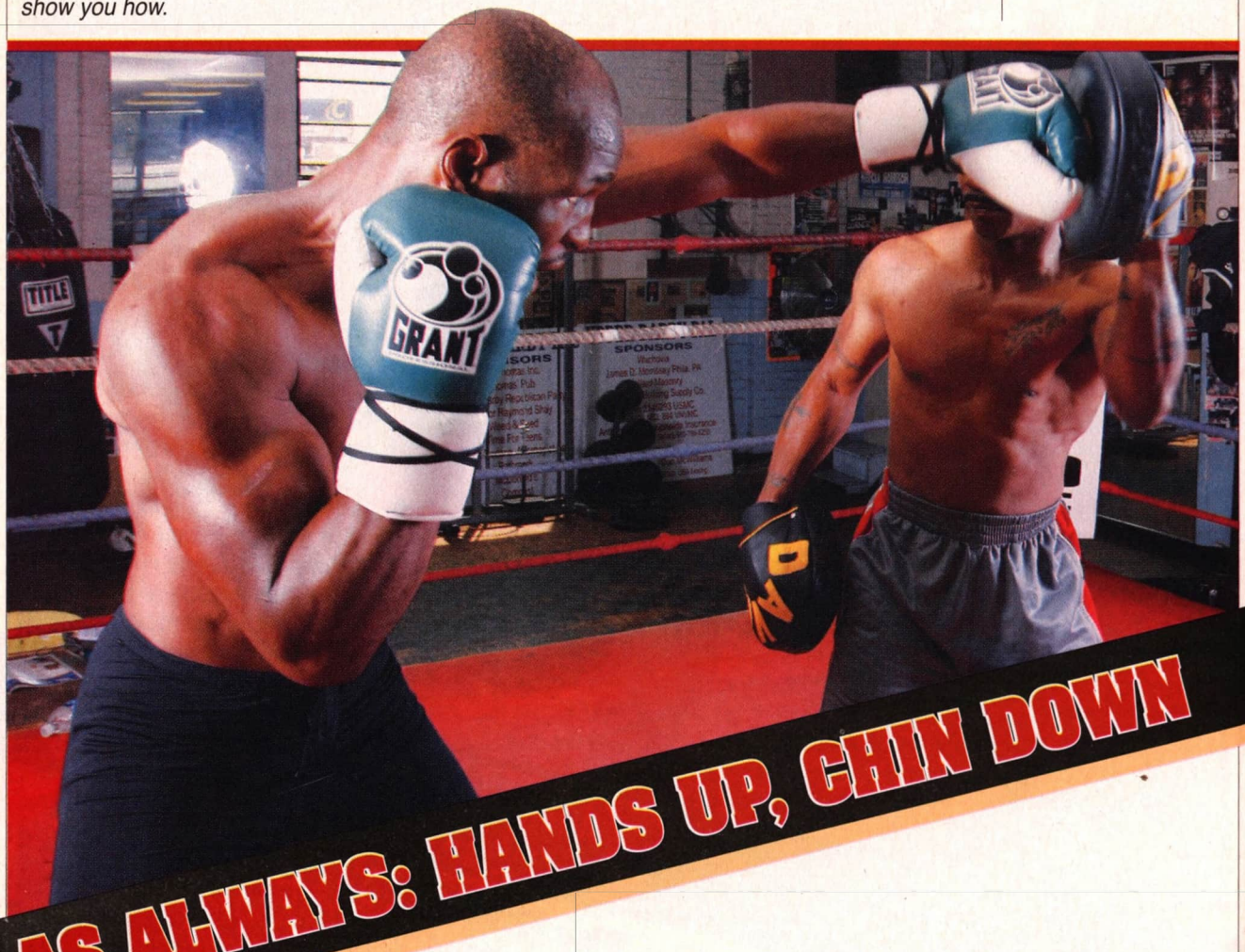
*The purpose of the jab is to blind your opponent to the punch that's coming next, but it accomplishes other things too. It sets up punches, helps set your rhythm, and keeps the other guy agitated. It does a lot of things. Larry Holmes' jab, which was one of the best ever in the heavyweight division, would cut you, frustrate you, and soften you up for the execution. Holmes knocked guys down with the jab.*

*A good jab isn't only an offensive weapon; it's defensive too. It can keep your guy at a distance when he wants to get close. A good jab can buy you time if you need it, keeping your guy occupied while you clear your head or catch your breath. The jab is the most important punch in boxing. There have been guys with great jabs who weren't great fighters, but I can't think of any great fighters who didn't have a great jab. But you have to learn how to use it. Here, Danny Davis and I show you how.*



***BERNARD HOPKINS***
*Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.*

*(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)*

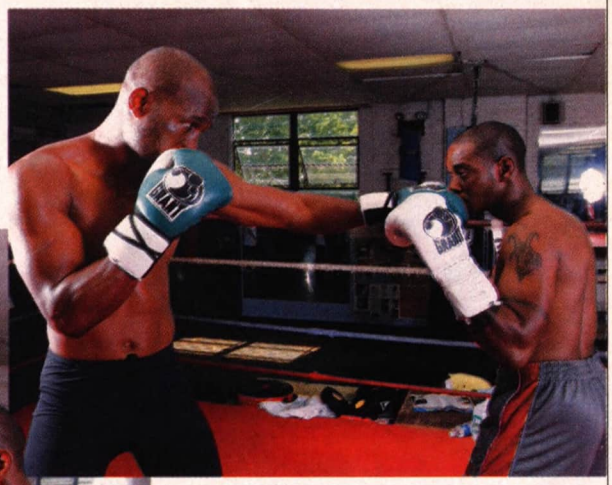


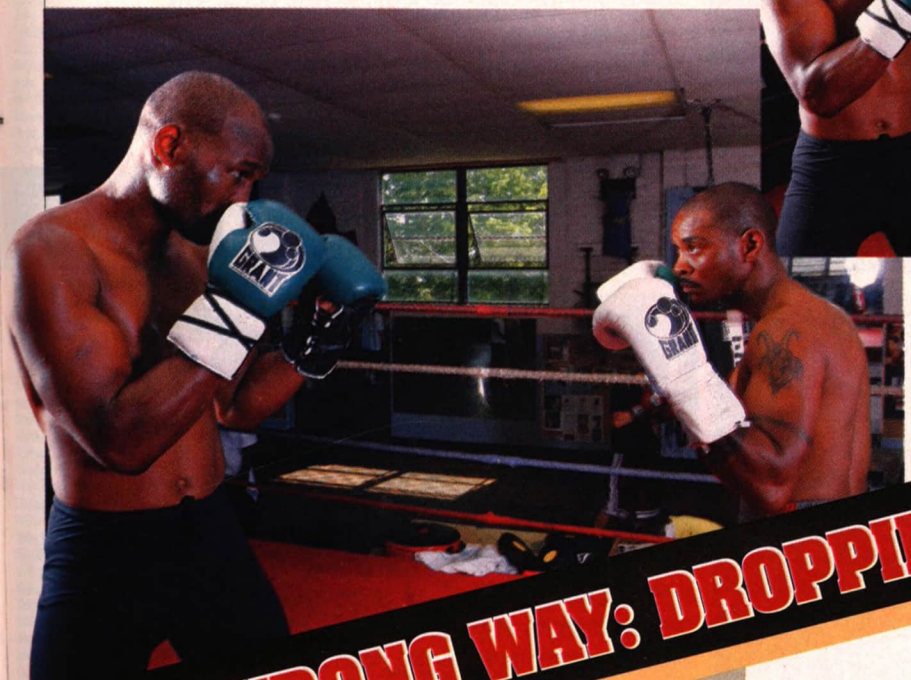

# AS ALWAYS: HANDS UP, CHIN DOWN

**FIRST THINGS FIRST, LOOK AT MY POSTURE HERE WHEN I JAB:** my chin is down, my right hand is up around my jaw, my right elbow tucked close to my body, and my eyes are open and looking straight ahead. If my opponent can hit me when I'm like this, he's going to have to work hard to do it. I don't give free shots. Neither should you.

# STRAIGHT OUT, STRAIGHT BACK

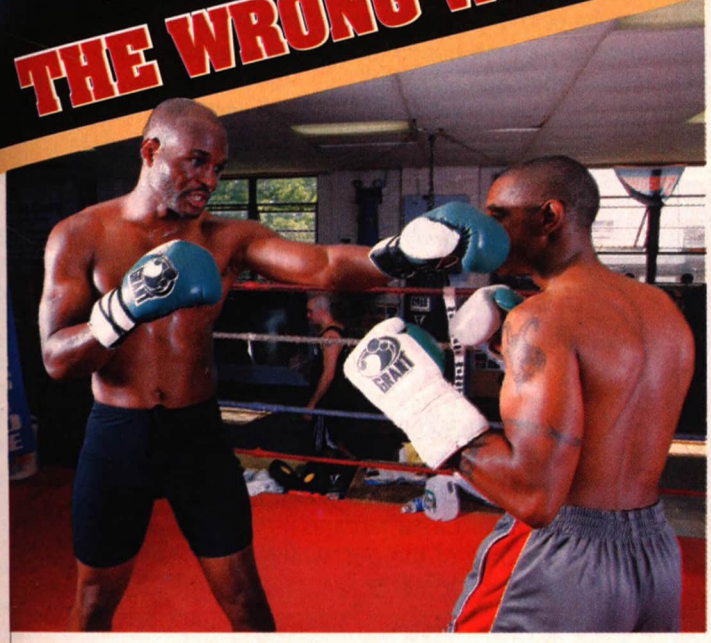
**THE JAB GOES STRAIGHT OUT, THEN STRAIGHT BACK.** No down then out, no out then down, then up. You want to give your opponent as little to shoot for as you can, and you don't want him to know what's coming. You do that by shooting it straight out, then straight back, the way it's shown in these two photos.

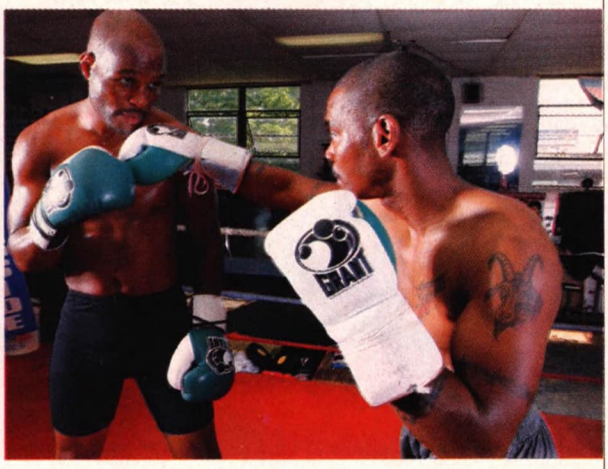




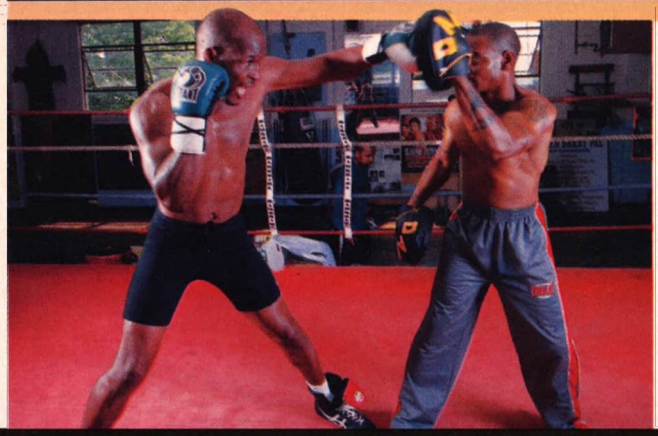
# THE WRONG WAY: DROPPING THE LEFT

**YOU'RE NOT MUHAMMAD ALI OR LARRY HOLMES.** If you get into the habit of dropping your left hand after the jab, and you're not far enough away when you do it, you will get hit with a counter right. Guaranteed. It happens all the time. This is what not to do to.



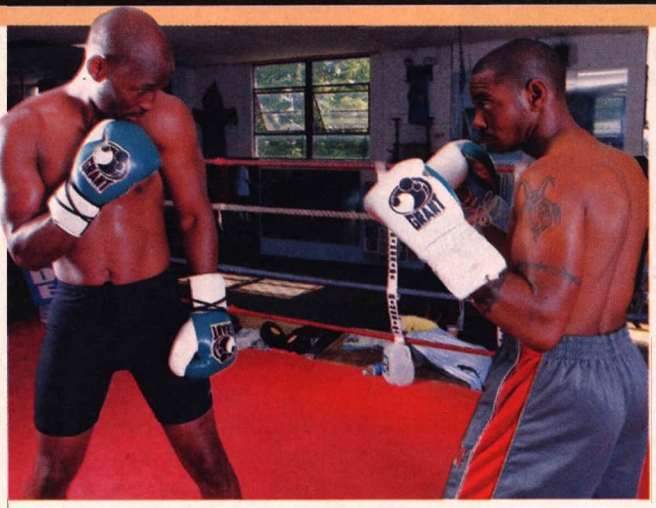


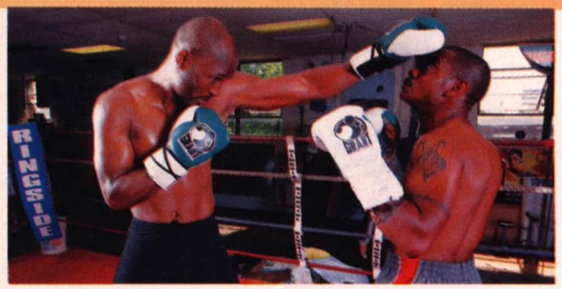
# YOUR FEET



**JABBING IS ALL ABOUT FOOTING, DISTANCE, AND TIMING.** Your measuring stick is your feet. They get you into position. Step into the punch; not a hard step until you get the right distance. Take small steps, then BAM. You shove the jab down his throat. You don't want it to land at the end of the punch; you want to jab where it comes in the front and heads out the back. Jab through him, not at him.

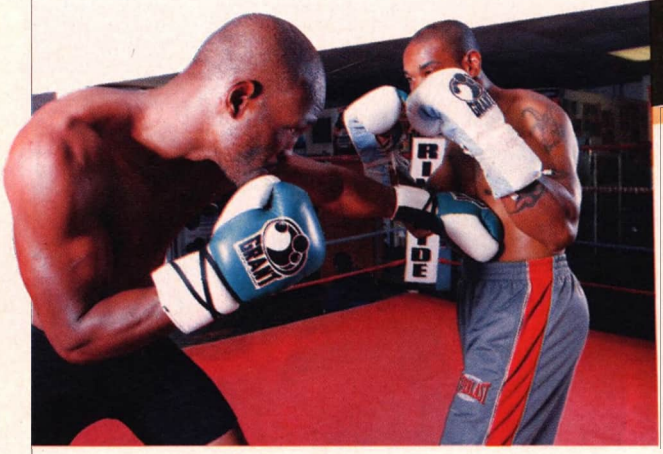
# SHOVEL JAB






**HERE'S A DIFFERENT KIND OF JAB—THE SHOVEL.** Your left hand starts at your waist and comes up from below so he doesn't see it. It can lift his head right into the path of your right cross. This isn't an excuse to keep your left hand down. Once you throw the jab, get the hand back up.

# JAB THE BODY



**I DON'T DO IT MUCH BECAUSE I'M TALLER THAN A LOT OF MY OPPONENTS, BUT IF YOU'RE SHORTER, THIS IS GOOD.** It's a good, hard bodyshot disguised as a jab and it lands right in the middle of the gut, which you can't shake off for a round or two.

# BACK ISSUES OF BOXING 88/2005

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**Sept. 1989: Sugar Ray Robinson: Photographic Tribute To The Master.** Also: Pernell Whitaker, Mark Breland, Richard Steele, Tyson-Williams preview.

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**March 1991: Who Will Survive In 1991?** Also: Holyfield-Douglas, Nunn-Curry, Buddy McGirt, Jess Willard, Nelson-Fenech preview.

**May 1991: The Heavyweight Division: Alive And Punching.** Also: Simon Brown, Marcos Villasana, Year That Was: 1964, Gene Tunney, Chavez-Taylor preview.

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**July 1995: Tyson-The Five Men He Should Fight … And The Five He Should Avoid.** Also: Benn-McClellan, Holyfield-Mercer preview, Arnie Rosenthal.

**Jan. 1996: Holyfield Answers The Tough Questions.** Also: Wayne McCullough, puncher vs. puncher, Paul Vaden, pay-per-view.

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**May 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Is He The Next Great Heavyweight?** Also: Oliver McCall, Manuel Medina, Paul Spadafora, Barrera-Morales II preview, 2001 in review.

**Sept. 2002: Boxing By The Numbers: A Different Look At The Best Of The Best.** Also: Zab Judah, Barrera-Morales, Antonio Margarito & Daniel Santos, Tokunbo Olajide, DeMarcus Corley.

**Jan. 2003: Klitschko vs. Lewis: Why Wait? Let's Get It On Now!** Also: Felix Trinidad, Barrera-Morales II, Zab Judah, Forrest-Mosley II.

**April 2003: Roy Jones' Heavyweight Gamble: The Experts Size Up His Chances.** Also: Mike Tyson, Oscar De La Hoya, Vivian Harris, Lawrence Clay-Bey, fighting friends.

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By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

# Making The Subjective Objective

It makes sense to make the assumption that every fighter who is knocked out or stopped due to head blows has suffered a concussion. As a result, boxing commissions dole out mandatory suspensions. Depending on the severity of the stoppage, the suspension could be 30, 45, or up to 90 days.

Unfortunately, the lengths of the suspensions are not based on hard facts, and many boxers could return to training much too soon.

The medical profession assumes that the majority of concussed athletes easily recover, but no one really knows. Post-concussion symptoms include headache, dizziness, confusion, blurred vision, insomnia, personality changes, fatigue, and memory loss. These can be subtle, take time to appear, and go unrecognized, even by those close to the athlete. Boxers who have not fully recovered are increasingly vulnerable to recurrent, cumulative, or catastrophic injury.

Traditional testing, including MRI or CT, can diagnose more serious problems such as a blood clot on the brain, but most concussions result in biochemical or blood flow changes within the brain that cannot be picked up on standardized testing.

There exist numerous management guidelines that grade concussions based on whether or not the athlete suffered loss of consciousness, confusion, and amnesia. Historically, the grade (I, II, or III) is often used as a way to determine when it is safe to compete again.

It is a bit different in boxing. Following a knockout or technical knockout, the Association of Boxing Commissions recommends a minimum of 45 days rest irrespective of the symptoms and that the fighter undergoes a brain scan for loss of consciousness.

Both the National Football League and National Hockey League recognize the high incidence of concussion and post-concussive symptoms. Hockey concussions are more similar to those in boxing than in football, as head blows in the former produce rotational forces and disrupt blood flow.

PHOTO BY JESSE D. GARRABRANT/GETTY IMAGES

*Mosley grabs Forrest on the way to the floor in their first bout*

All NFL players undergo neuropsychological testing at the beginning of the season to determine their baseline level of functioning. It is repeated in conjunction with clinical evaluation should an athlete be removed from play due to head injury, in order to track his recovery.

The NFL also established a mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) committee to operate as an independent group. Research is conducted to advance scientific knowledge about MTBI in an effort to prevent chronic and acute brain injury in players. At least in theory, NFL standards are based on research, and they state that medical considerations override competitive situations.

Today, the basis for concussion management by the NFL and NHL is the usage of neuropsychological testing designed by University of Pittsburgh's neuropsychologist Dr. Mark Lovell. ImPACT is a user-friendly computer-based testing program designed as a post-concussive assessment and cognitive test. It is now used by more than 25 NFL teams, NASCAR, 250 colleges, and more than 1,000 high schools.

Lovell began working as a head injury specialist with the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1989. Traditional cognitive testing he used to assess concussion was too cumbersome and lengthy, so in 1994 he created ImPACT.

"ImPACT is a brief group of neuropsychological tests measuring reaction time, memory, and thinking speed. An athlete will not always tell the truth about his symptoms. If we can't believe the athlete, then we need some objective form of evaluation," said Lovell. "The test takes approximately 25 minutes, the results are immediate, and the test is made to be administered by doctor-level personnel. We have trained 500-600 physicians nationally so far."

Therefore, ringside physicians or athletic trainers could administer the exam.

Concussion research has determined that the length of time the symptoms last is far more important than the athlete's initial complaints in determining outcome. Lesser blows can cause more symptoms than harder blows. Younger athletes and women have longer recovery time.

ImPACT could be valuable in boxing, where boxers and trainers may fail to recognize or even ignore symptoms. Cost tends to enter everyone's mind, but the test would cost only $2 per fighter. Who can complain about that when an MRI might run $400 and a neurological examination $200?

When Nevada looked to pass a regulation requiring prefight MRI scans, objections weren't solely about the price. Another factor was fear of the test results. Will they prevent a fighter from competing? Will it lengthen their suspension or stop their career?

In fact, Dr. Lovell has repeatedly demonstrated that ImPACT will often prove an athlete can return to play sooner than previously believed.

"New Zealand rugby has the same problem as boxing," noted Lovell. "One problem is their timetable. An athlete sustains a concussion and they can be out for a mandatory six weeks. That means they might be out the rest of the season. Using ImPACT, they can take each injury individually."

The player can return as soon as they are back to normal and more athletes would get the help they need as opposed to concealing injuries.

Logistics are also an issue in prefight and postfight testing. Boxers may compete in one jurisdiction once a year and leave the state soon after the fight. So without a national governing body, how can fighters obtain baseline testing?

Complaints arise that there is not enough time for fighters to undergo an MRI, so testing must become a licensing requirement. The ImPACT exam is available all over the United States, and if the boxer is from a foreign country, it could be obtained before or after the weigh-in.

Furthermore, Lovell has developed baseline testing in 13 languages, which is designed to fit education, age, sex, and ethnicity. Therefore, theoretically, a boxer might only need to undergo the study if stopped or knocked out.

Experts frequently attribute consecutive losses suffered by the same fighter to all manner of things, some valid, most not. But one thing is for sure: A boxer who has not completely recovered from a concussion is doomed to another poor showing.

This may explain that despite five months between fights, Fernando Vargas was stopped so easily in his second 2006 bout against Shane Mosley, and why Mosley, who obviously suffered a concussion in the second round due to a headbutt in his first loss against Vernon Forrest, was defeated again in a 12-round decision when they fought a second time in 2002.

Testing such as ImPACT could have determined whether or not Vargas and Mosley were neurologically 100 percent.

Neuro-cognitive testing represents only one piece of the puzzle in ultimately and objectively determining when a boxer should spar or fight after a stoppage or a tough bout. Due to the fact that many commissions provide weak suspensions and boxers are notoriously disingenuous about symptoms, ImPACT could finally answer whether the arbitrary periods of time off are sufficient or too long. ■

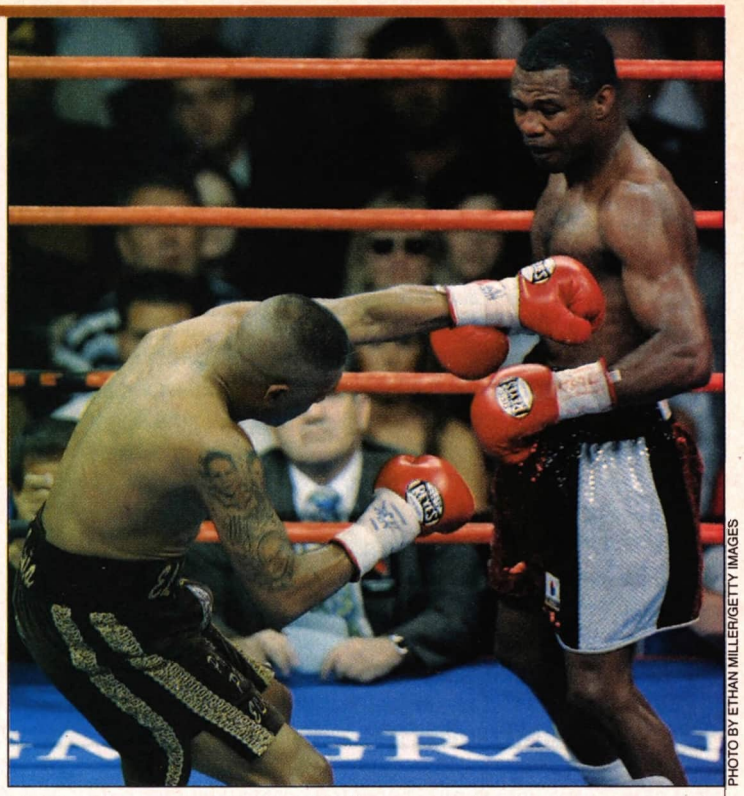


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

***Had Vargas recovered from his first TKO loss to Mosley when he was stopped in the rematch?***

# [Hitting On The Break]

By Jim Bagg

# From Bagg To Worse, 2008 Edition

You can tell a tree has aged another year by counting the rings. But since the Baggarooney hasn't swung an ax since the time about 30 years ago when he spent a horrible winter snowed in working as a caretaker at a hotel, he won't be checking out the insides of any redwoods anytime soon.

So how does the world's most gifted boxing columnist know that another year has passed? By counting the rings around his toilet that never gets cleaned (ah, the bachelor life). By counting the holes in his socks. By noting that the waist size in his pants has just gone up again.

Or when Boss Collins (Nigel, not Tom) tells him it's time for another year-end awards issue.

That means Fighter of the Year, Fight of the Year, and all that crap. If you want to read about the best this and the best that, that's what half of this magazine you're holding is devoted to. But celebrating achievement isn't really the Baggman's bag. Criticizing, ripping, insulting, demeaning, and hopefully offending—those actions comprise the backbone of "Hitting On The Break." And that's why every year, you can count on the Baggie Awards to shine a spotlight on the very worst that the last 12 months in boxing had had to offer.

Last year, Baggie recipients captured the coveted tinfoil-wrapped urine cup, used and signed by James Toney. This year, due to further budget cuts, our "winners" will receive in the mail a postcard featuring a picture of the new Oscar De La Hoya statue outside the Staples Center. It's like they've won their very own giant award statue ... only not even close.

Anyway, on to the 2008 Baggies!

**Loser of the Year:** Bottom honors at this year's Baggies go not to a fighter, a promoter, a manager, or even a cocker spaniel, but rather to an inanimate object: the WBA heavyweight belt. You almost have to feel sorry for that black and gold hunk o' junk.

For starters, would you want to spend your time strapped around the hairy, sweaty waist of Nicolay Valuev? The "Beast With The Least" has to leave a stink that doesn't come off with 1,000 washings.

Additionally, how must it feel for a belt to be so utterly worthless? From the moment Gilberto Mendoza elected to rip this strap from undisputed champion Lennox Lewis, it's spent most of its time residing with either Valuev or John Ruiz and has never landed on the man considered at the time to be the division's best. In 2008, specifically, it got stripped from Ruslan Chagaev and handed back to a man Chagaev had already beaten in Valuev, then it somehow remained in the seven-footer's possession after he turned in maybe the worst performance ever from a heavyweight titlist, when he needed bogus judging to beat the dusty remains of Evander Holyfield.

Valuev should have been judged a loser on December 20. Instead this pathetic belt became an even bigger loser than it already was.

**Imbecile of the Year:** With all due disrespect to Paulie Malignaggi and his Lee Press-On hair, the king of stupidity this year was **Joan Guzman**, who took his own boxing career, crumpled it up into a ball, and sky-hooked it into the waste basket. Now we know why they call this guy "Little Tyson" even though he bears no fistic resemblance to Iron Mike: because, like Big Tyson, Guzman is a master of self-sabotage.

Guzman had everything going for him, but because he apparently also had the discipline of a teenaged girl making off with Daddy's credit card, he failed to make 135 pounds for a major Showtime showdown against Nate Campbell. For a guy who'd made 130 pounds his previous three fights, there were no acceptable excuses. And he didn't just miss making weight—he missed by 3½ pounds. The fight was cancelled, and who paid the worst price? Campbell, who had to file for bankruptcy after missing out on the $300,000 payday.

Guzman is 32 years old, but he's a child. If he gets blacklisted by the major boxing networks for this disrespectful

PHOTO BY VLADIMIR RYS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*A black and gold hunk o' junk*

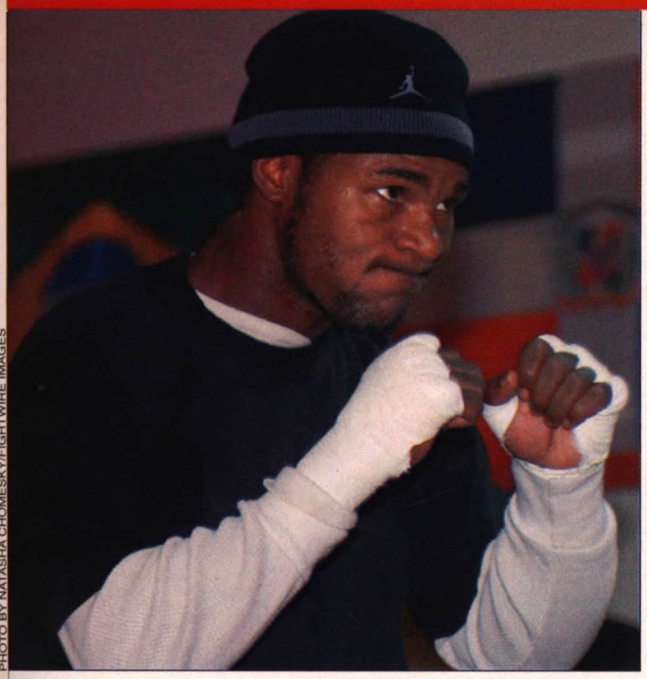


PHOTO BY NATASHA CHOMESKY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

*Guzman sabotaged his own career in 2008*

display, the Baggenbrau won't shed a tear. If the Baggaganostra can wake up with a hangover seven days a week and still file his columns on deadline like a pro, then there's no excuse for a professional fighter to come in heavy for the biggest fight of his life.

**Egomaniac of the Year:** We could give this award to Bob Arum, for having the ego to believe nothing that goes wrong is ever his fault and instead blaming gas prices and the economy for everything. (Yeah, high gas prices are what handicapped Kelly Pavlik vs. Gary Lockett. The fact that Lockett was unknown, unproven, and incapable had nothing whatsoever to do with it.)

But how could the Bagginator possibly give the award to Uncle Bob when Tio Jose—as in WBC President/Dictator **Jose Sulaiman**—is still breathing? If you're looking for ego on parade, it's tough to beat *twice* asking Pavlik to pay sanctioning fees for fights you didn't sanction, plus ignoring the official result of the Francisco Lorenzo-Humberto Soto fight and recognizing an alternate result of your choosing. It takes a lot of nerve to think you can get away with crap like that, and it also takes a lot of ego. (It also helps to have promoters, fighters, journalists, and TV networks enabling your ego and abuse of power for decades by paying you money or calling your titles "world championships.")

**Wuss of the Year:** There are plenty of quality nominees in this category. We could give it THE RING's own Ivan Goldman, for sheepishly backing out of his columnist-vs.-columnist feud with the Baggafarian. We could give it to Floyd Mayweather for taking a hike without defending the welterweight championship against a single serious welterweight contender. But in the end, Goldman is probably just trying to take the high road and Mayweather could be un-retired by the time this mag hits. So they're both off the hook.

Not so for **Zsolt Erdei**, a fighter who, despite his willingness to trade punches for a living, keeps finding ways to be a first-class wuss about it. He owns a light heavyweight belt, but he refuses to put it on the line against a contender who could make THE RING's top 50. His last four challengers have been DeAndrey Abron, Tito Mendoza, George Blades, and Danny Santiago. Even a lame-duck President wouldn't pardon Erdei for that schedule. And now Erdei is signed to fight Yuri Barashian, an anonymous Ukrainian who's coming off a shutout loss in his last fight.

Who's next, Zsolt? The 70-year-old Bob Foster? Christy Martin, perhaps? (Oh, wait, never mind; boxing fans have heard of those two. They'll never make your short list.)

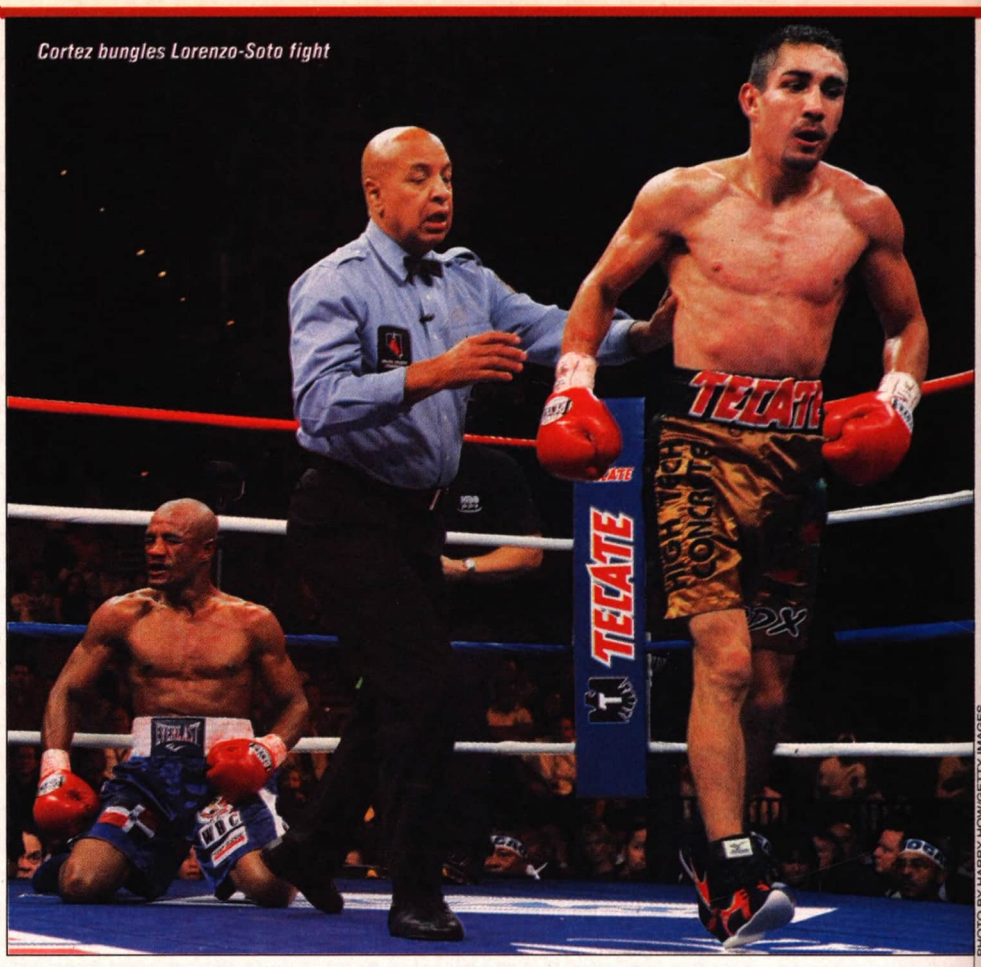
**Idiot for the Ages Lifetime Achievement Award:** Year in and year out, no fighter can match the consistency of **Zab Judah** when it comes to committing acts of stupidity. With this year's kayo defeat at the hands of a shower door, you've done it again, Zab. Bravo. The Bagg-a-donuts would ask you to make a quick acceptance speech, but he has no desire to hear the phrase "ya know what I'm sayin'" 60 times in 30 seconds.

PHOTO BY NORBERT MILLAUER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

*Erdei after defending against anonymous clubfighter DeAndrey Abron*

**Incompetent Referee of the Year:** In 2007, he was a mere runner-up, but **Joe Cortez** will not be the Susan Lucci of this category, as he secured the award by bungling the Lorenzo-Soto fight so severely that even Ed Hoculi felt embarrassed for him. Following a 2007 campaign that saw him take ownership of the word "meddlesome" in Ricky Hatton vs. Jose Luis Castillo and Floyd Mayweather vs. Hatton, Cortez demonstrated clearly that it's time for him to hang up his bowtie.

(And nobody's happier about Cortez' unfair firmness than Marlon B. Wright, the Canadian ref who botched Lucian Bute vs. Librado Andrade and would have had the Baggie in the bag in any other year.)



*Cortez bungles Lorenzo-Soto fight*

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

**Blind Judge of the Year:** It's one thing for a judge to score a fight for the wrong guy. It's another thing entirely for a judge to score the fight for the wrong guy *by a shutout.* On February 16 in Las Vegas, **Doug Tucker** somehow thought Jose Navarro beat Cristian Mijares 120-108, even though every sensible observer at ringside had between seven and 10 rounds going Mijares' way. Even Ray Charles could have scored the fight better than Tucker. (And the Baggmeister isn't using Ray Charles because he's a famous blind guy. He's using him because he's a famous dead guy. That's how inept Tucker was.)

**Worst Night of the Year:** Madison Square Garden, HBO, partial heavyweight unification—it was **Wladimir Klitschko vs. Sultan Ibragimov**, and the stage was set for boxing's big men to renew interest in a decaying division. Instead, to a soundtrack of snores, heavyweight boxing took another gigantic step back. But at least Klitschko emerged as the undisputed heavyweight pat-a-cake king.

**Worst Fortnight of the Year:** The **Beijing Olympics** will be remembered by the Baggweiser for three things: endless on-air diagrams of Michael Phelps' freakish, double-jointed body, complete with everything except webbed toes; Usain Bolt displaying more dominance than Phelps but remaining the secondary story, presumably because of the American networks' anti-single-jointed bias; and the boxing competition being by far the most unwatchable sport of the Olympiad.

Please remind the Baggorama to find a comfortable spot in a coffin before the summer of 2012 rolls around. THE RING doesn't pay well enough to make a human being sit through another two weeks of that.

**Nonsensical Quote of the Year:** The final award at the '08 Baggies goes to **Oscar De La Hoya**. When asked if he ever thought he'd be fighting Manny Pacquiao, Oscar responded, "No, never in my wildest dreams. And that's why this fight is called The Dream Match."

So you didn't dream about it, and therefore it's The Dream Match?

Well, folks, the quote could've been worse. They could have asked Zab Judah to tell us why the fight was called The Dream Match. Ya know what the Baggster's sayin'?

## And The Stingray Goes To ...

Bob Duffy, the matchmaker for the December 4 card at Roseland Ballroom in New York that saw two undefeated prospects bumped off by journeymen. First Aldo Valtierra, a tough Mexican who sported a four-fight winless streak and a 24-10 (13) record, won by majority decision in a 10-round scorcher against the 22-0-1 (15) Jorge Teron. Then, on the same card, 10-0 (6) Dominican heavyweight prospect Nagy Aguilera lost his zero at the hands of 24-17-1 (21) Marcellus Brown.

Okay, okay, it's kind of a cop-out to give the Stingray to a matchmaker. And Brown's win came via second-round disqualification, so he isn't really Stingray-worthy either. So the

# The Monthly Mailbagg

*Just like any TV awards show, the Baggies ran long, which means very little space for a Mailbagg this month. Which is just as well, given the fourth-grade-level literacy of most of the e-mails received:*

**Mr. Baggaboo,**

**What's with all the excitement over Margarito vs. Mosley? Right after Mosley beat Mayorga, didn't every single boxing writer write about how Margs would kill Shane? And now we're supposed to be psyched that the fight is happening? Is there something I'm missing here?**

**Teddy V.**
**Arlington, VA**

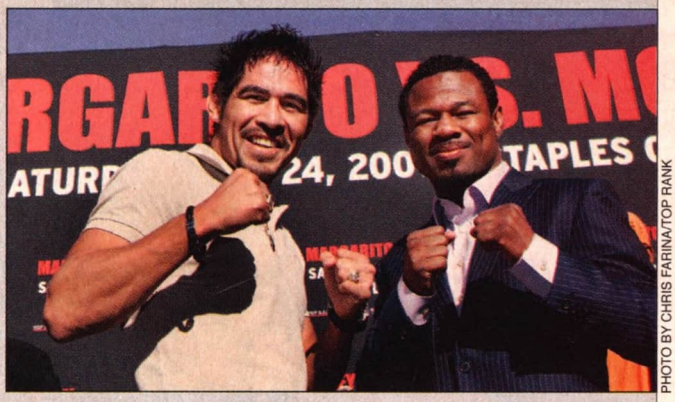


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

*Margarito-Mosley: Were you psyched?*

Teddy,

No, you're not missing anything. Most of the Baggulosity's boxing-beat brethren go right ahead and contradict themselves from one article to the next because (a) they've already forgotten what they wrote the day before, or (b) they didn't mean what they wrote initially, they were just trying to sound bold and opinionated. But if you want the truth on Margarito-Mosley, you've come to the right place.

So here's the deal: There is a chance Mosley is going to take a severe beating. But as long as Miguel Cotto needs a comeback fight first, and as long as Margarito isn't interested in rematches against Paul Williams or Josh Clottey, this is as competitive a fight as can be made for "The Mexican Mullet" at welterweight. And when you consider that Plan B was for Margarito not to fight at all until around June, it's easy to see why people are suddenly excited about Margarito-Mosley.

right thing is to give the award to Valtierra. Still, Duffy deserves credit for finding opponents who'll fight back and, in turn, give the paying customers something for their money. Too many matchmakers these days think their job is to make sure the unbeaten kid gets an easy win. In the old days, matchmaking was about actually making a *match*. Nowadays, the art of matchmaking often looks more like the art of mismatchmaking, so thanks to Duffy for providing at least one night of throwback fun.

And thanks to Valtierra for making Duffy look really good at his job. (Or really bad at his job, if you're part of Team Teron.) ■

***Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com***

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

*Klitschko and Ibragamov stunk out the Garden*

# Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

## Manny-Oscar Reaction

Congratulations to Manny Pacquiao for his dominant performance against Oscar De La Hoya. Unfortunately, in the wake of this historic victory, Jorge Arce felt compelled to describe Oscar's performance as being uncharacteristic of a "true Mexican." I suppose from this statement, one must deduce that Arce would describe Julio Cesar Chavez' performances against Oscar similarly—similar situation, similar outcome.

Throughout his tremendously successful career, De La Hoya has participated in numerous tough, compelling fights that required a great deal of heart and ability. For Arce or any of the self-described "Mexicans For Manny" to suggest otherwise is embarrassing. Oscar De La Hoya has brought more class and excitement to the sport of boxing than any other pugilist in the last few decades. So shut up, Arce! You should be more concerned about enhancing your defensive skills prior to your fight with Vic Darchinyan.

LYNDON ALMS
Houston, TX

Never in my life have I been so glad to be so wrong! Like many others, I felt that Manny Pacquiao's bout with Oscar De La Hoya would be a horrible mismatch. Well, it was—but certainly not in the way I expected.

Only last year De La Hoya lost a split decision to Floyd Mayweather, and the year before knocked out the dangerous and powerful Ricardo Mayorga. So by no means was he "washed up," as some are now claiming. So how on earth could he lose to a fighter so much smaller? Just ask Manny. Or, perhaps better still, Freddie Roach, his trainer.

PATRICK TEE
Quebec City, Quebec

Manny Pacquiao put on one of the most beautiful boxing exhibitions I have ever seen. Pac-Man darted in and out, stopping just long enough to unleash brutal combinations to De La Hoya's head and body. Retire, Oscar. It's time. There's no other place to go.

GLOVER HILL III
Wewahitchka, FL

I'm urging all true boxing fans to start a letter-writing campaign to entice Floyd Mayweather to come out of retirement for just one more fight, against Manny Pacquiao to decide who is the true the P-4-P king. It would be the most talked-about fight since the first Roberto Duran-Ray Leonard encounter. Pac-Man would be the first fighter to bring the speed and power to truly test Mayweather. Just the thought of this fight has my palms sweating. Let's make it happen!

JERRY L. JACKSON
Harlem, NY

PHOTO BY JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTPHOTO

***As would be expected, THE RING received more readers' comments about the Pacquiao-De La Hoya fight than any other topic this issue. All were impressed by Pac-Man, many surprised by the outcome, and calls for Floyd Mayweather to come out of retirement to fight Pacquiao are mounting.***

## B-Hop vs. Marvelous Marvin

If old-school middleweights Marvin Hagler and Bernard Hopkins, who share much in common, could have fought each other in their primes, I believe Hagler would have won in an all-time middleweight war.

STEPHEN L. GARDELLA
Brockton, MA

## Appreciating Augustus

I thought the "Round One" item about Emanuel Augustus in the December 2008 issue ("New Honor For 'The Drunken Master'") was great. It shows you don't have to be the top dog to get recognition in THE RING. Augustus doesn't have the best record, but the love of fighting is in his heart.

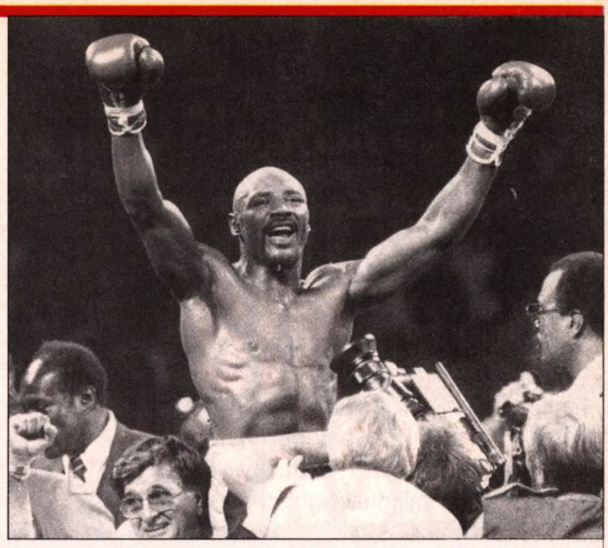
MICHAEL MORAN
Delano, CA

## Lacy Lament

Watching Jeff Lacy struggle against Jermain Taylor was depressing. A once-ferocious fighter who cut a swath through the super middleweight division has now been reduced to a nervous, plodding, one-dimensional brawler with no fundamentals. I really don't understand why Lacy continues his routine of throwing nothing but wild, singular shots while neglecting his defense. Didn't he learned anything from the Calzaghe fight? It's all about boxing ability, Jeff: jabbing, moving, combination punching, and defense.

I don't agree that Jeff is a totally shot fighter. He appears haunted by the Calzaghe fight, and his shoulder injury seems to have made him wary of throwing his left hook. Get your act together, Jeff, and reclaim your past form. You're still young. Don't let your career go to waste.

BERNARDO AGUIRRE
Sydney, Australia



*Marvin Hagler beat a lot of good Philadelphia middleweights in his time, and reader Stephen L. Gardella fantasizes about what might have happened if Marvelous Marvin and Bernard Hopkins would have fought in their primes.*

## Caribbean Rivalry

The undefeated duo of Yuriorkis Gamboa and Juan Manuel Lopez should fight each other in Miami. It would be a great fight, make loads of money, and possibly lead to a series of explosive fights between Cubans and Puerto Ricans.

PAUL M. SOTACK
Buffalo, NY

## Cruiser Kudos

The Tomasz Adamek-Steve Cunningham fight for THE RING cruiserweight title showed that the cruiserweight class is one of the most talented and underrated in boxing today. Fans, writers, and analysts alike ask what happened to the heavyweights of the old days, the ones who were in shape, fought skillfully, feverishly, and with heart. Well, they still exist. They've just been labeled cruiserweights. The heavyweight division of the past that we admire so much weighed from around 185 to approximately 200 pounds, as opposed to 230-pounders (and above) of today. HBO needs to get its act together and televise a few cruiserweight fights, instead of more Jermain Taylor, Antonio Tarver, and Vernon Forrest snoozefests.

JOSEPH CARLO RUSSO
USS Iwo Jima, Persian Gulf ■

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/GETTY IMAGES

*Tired of watching boring fights between oversized heavyweights? Reader Joseph Carlo Russo suggests watching cruiserweights such as Tomasz Adamek and Steve Cunningham instead. As Russo points out, they are approximately the same size as the great heavyweights of the past.*

By Don Stradley

## Double Comeback

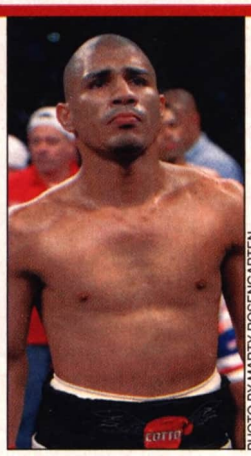


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

*Cotto is looking to come back in February*

Crawling from the wreckage of their first career losses, **Kelly Pavlik** and **Miguel Cotto** will be co-headlining a unique pay-per-view event on February 21, with Pavlik defending the middleweight championship against **Marco Antonio Rubio** in Pavlik's hometown of Youngstown, Ohio, while Atlantic City's Board-walk Hall is tentatively set to stage Cotto's bout with UK welterweight **Michael Jennings**. The details were still being ironed out as we went to press, with venues, prices, and undercards still to be decided.

Pavlik's loss to **Bernard Hopkins** last October left him with the stigma of being a one-dimensional fighter who is easy pickings for more skillful boxers. It's an unfortunate label to be stuck with, but an exciting brawl with Rubio could be exactly what Pavlik needs to get back on track. Provided, of course, he wins.

Rubio should be a tougher test than **Gary Lockett**, Pavlik's only middleweight challenger to date. Rubio is a tall, stiff puncher whose ledger includes wins over some of the game's crustiest old warhorses, including **Jorge Vaca**, **Fitz Vanderpool**, **Grady Brewer**, and **Frankie Randall**. Some aren't taking Rubio seriously as a threat to Pavlik's title, probably because of an embarrassing one-punch knockout loss to **Kofi Jantuah** in 2004, and a split-decision loss to **Kassim Ouma** in '06, both at 154.

Still, 37 of Rubio's 48 opponents have failed to finish on their feet, giving him the proverbial puncher's chance against Pavlik, who is returning to the 160-pound limit after facing Hopkins at 170. Pavlik's fans saw Rubio on the undercard of the Pavlik-Hopkins pay-per-view, when he earned a hard-fought split decision over **Enrique Ornelas**.

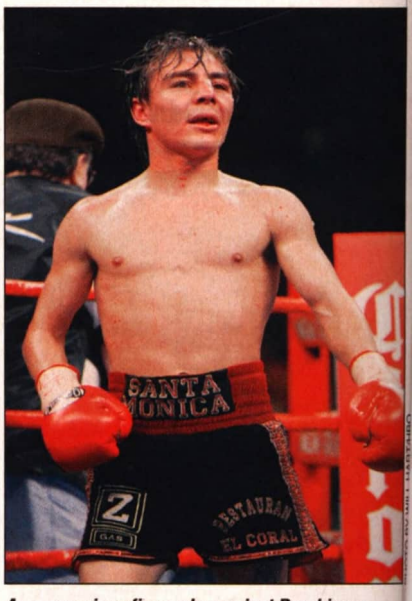
An impressive showing by Pavlik could give credence to his supporters who believe the 170-pound catchweight ruined him against Hopkins. It was as if not having to train down to 160 left his body feeling flat. There were also rumors that he was displaying flu-like symptoms prior to fighting Hopkins, never a good sign when preparing to face a future Hall of Famer.

As for Cotto, he needs to win big. A workmanlike decision will not do. He and Jennings will be fighting for a vacant minor welterweight title, but the bout's chief purpose is to convince fans that Cotto can still fight after being savaged last July by **Antonio Margarito**.

Jennings is a swaggering boxer-puncher who has treated UK fans to some exciting fights. He's lost only once in 35 bouts and holds a minor welterweight title, a distinction earned by outpointing **Mehrded Takaloo** in April 2007 in Wales. Cotto will be Jennings' first opponent on American soil. Partly because the opponents didn't meet their approval, and partly because of scheduling, HBO passed on the double-bill, so the pay-per-view will be helmed by Top Rank. **Lee Samuels**, Top Rank's veteran publicist, scoffed at the notion that this is a gamble during the current economic crunch.

"There's still money out there among fans," Samuels said, pointing to the 1.25 million buys for **De La Hoya-Pacquiao** as proof. "People still want to be entertained. Not everyone is on Wall Street. Success depends on how a show is budgeted. If we do one-tenth of what Oscar and Manny did, we're happy. Our pay-per-views from Mexico are carefully budgeted, and have done great business; we're planning more Top Rank pay-per-views in the future."

## Listen Up




*Arce promises fireworks against Darchinyan*

The February 7 season premiere of Showtime's *Championship Boxing* features two of the most explosive small men in the game, **Jorge Arce** and **Vic Darchinyan**. "Arce is going to be my human piñata," said Darchinyan.

"I think it's a spectacular fight," Darchinyan's promoter, **Gary Shaw**, said. "The press conferences may be as good as the fight." The bout will most likely come to fruition at the Honda Center in Anaheim, California. **Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov** faces prospect **Antonio DeMarco** on the undercard ... HBO's February 14 offering will showcase lightweight contender **Nate Campbell** against **Ali Funeka**, and **Ricardo Mayorga** vs. **Alfredo Angulo** ... ESPN2's February 27 edition of *Friday Night Fights* will take place at the Hard Rock Casino in Hollywood Florida, featuring former light heavyweight champ **Glenn Johnson** against, as of press time, the dreaded TBA. ■

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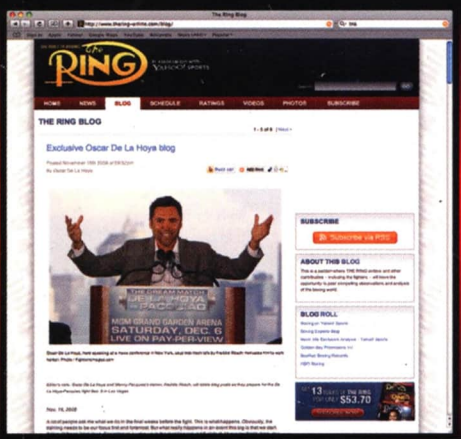


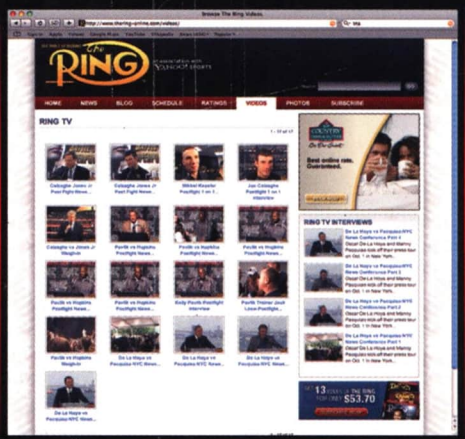

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